

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

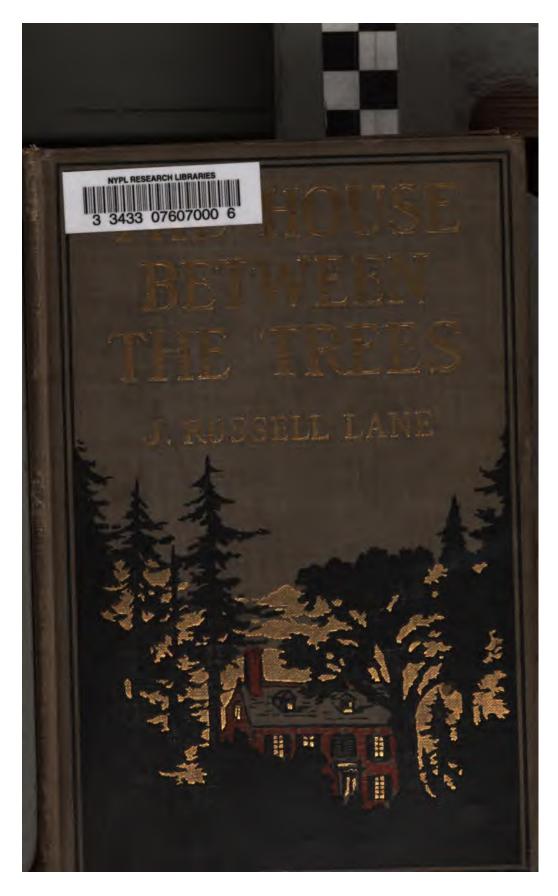
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/









·

•

.

•

·

1 .

•

The state of the s

THE NEW YEAR OF





Nina

i



*

The House **Between the Trees

A NOVEL

By

J. RUSSELL LANE



THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
1909

111329B

COPYRIGHT, 1909

RY

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO. BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

T. S. A.

All Rights Reserved



AND THE THE

TO LUELLA BEATRICE LANE

from whose loving comradeship came my inspiration to write, I fondly dedicate this book

•

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.	·	7403 1
II.	The Red Demon	9
III.	A Woman in the Case	27
IV.	Will's Visit	40
V.	The Escape	45
VI.	Across the Clove	71
VII.	The Proposal	92
VIII.	"I Cannot Ask Her To Be My Wife"	114
IX.	The Wedding	129
X.	"Just a Knight of Fortune"	188
XI.	The Man of the Woods	155
XII.	The Fair in the Cave	179
XIII.	The Operation	198
XIV.	The Rival	220
XV.	An Uncomfortable Half Mile	287
XVI	" A Man Stood in His Place"	255

iv CONTENTS.

XVII.	"That's too Easy"	PAG SE	31
XVIII.	Lillian's Confession	80	H
XIX.	Dick Reveals All	81	2
XX.	"One of the Nobility"	82	2
XXI.	"A Glorious Storm"	88	4
XXII.	Detected but not Caught	84	ß

ILLUSTRATIONS

Nin	а.		•	•	•	•	•	. <i>F</i>	ronti	spiece
					•					Page
Sam	care	full	y pio	cked 1	the in	jure	1 chil	d up	•	2
Smi	thers	was	imı	media	tely	surro	unde	d .	•	33
Wil	was	the	first	t to s	peak					101
"W	ill yo	u ta	ke t	he le	tter u	p the	ere fo	r me	,,,	145
Ben	ding Hah:		r hir		m sav		•	e of	Ed	175
Wel	•						_	for o	-	289
" Re	ead it	,'' s	aid (Sam	•			•		329

·

CHAPTER I.

THE ACCIDENT.

"Hello, Hiram!" cried Sam leaning against the door-post familiarly. "How do you find things nowadays? Business brisk, I reckon?"

"No, Sam, things ain't just as they should be with me. You see I am not as young as I was, and them old hands have lost some of their cunning. Then, too, there's that girl of mine a-gettin' older every day, Sam, a-gettin' older every day," said the old man addressed as Hiram with a sad shake of his gray head. "Ain't gettin' the education she ought to have neither, and the Lord only knows what will become of her when her old grandfather casts in his last chips. However, I'm goin' to do the best I can by her, and not waste my time worrying about the rest."

"That's right, Hiram, that girl will come out all right. She's got the right kind of stock in her and

that's what tells every time. You can pretty nightell a colt by its breeding and I guess a young one ain't no different. Well, I reckon the mail's in by this time. Anythin' there for you I'll fetch it along. Good morn—"

A shrill scream caused him to turn around—a scream that curdled the blood in his veins.

Little Lillian, her grandfather's idol, was romping in the road in front of his shop with her pet collie, Fido, throwing a ball for him to bring back to her, when there came the scream that had interrupted Sam. Fido had made a dive under an old lady's skirt to recover the ball, nearly scaring the poor old soul out of her wits, and just as Lillian started after her pet there was a roar, the clanging of a bell and then a cloud of dust, and something darted down the road leaving Lillian prone upon the ground.

Sam carefully picked the injured child up in his arms and carried the precious burden to the door of Hiram's shop. The grandfather's hearing had become impaired by old age so he knew nothing of the accident until he was confronted with his grandchild's limp body, when, with one bound, he sprang towards it and those nearest to him heard him call out feebly to God for help before he plunged suddenly forward and fell unconscious at the feet of Sam.

"Here comes the Doctor," cried Mrs. Bates, a



Sam carefully picked up the injured child

Property Services

Arthur San Arthur Ann



kind-hearted old lady, who with Sam's assistance had taken Lillian and her grandfather to their home nearby. Dr. Mumford entered the room, glanced at the child and said:

"She still lives; lay her upon the couch here while I see how badly the old man is hurt," then glancing towards Mrs. Bates added: "remove her clothing and wash her head and face, please."

Gently he raised Mr. Turner's head and after giving directions to Sam and applying a restorative, he watched while the old man was lifted to his bed and then returned to examine Lillian.

"A fractured arm; we can mend that all right, and a number of bruises," he said lightly. "We will have her all right in a short time, Mrs. Bates, but as for old Hiram, I'm afraid his case is a different matter."

"See, his color is coming back," whispered Mrs. Bates. "He is trying to speak."

The doctor stooped over him and asked gently, "What is it, Hiram?"

The old man made an effort and succeeded in muttering thickly, "My—child!"

"Oh, she is all right," replied the doctor, cheerfully. "Don't worry about her; she will be nursing you before long. You just keep quiet and think about getting round yourself. Mrs. Bates here will look out for the little one."

and sorrows had weakened the old man until his strength was well-nigh spent. Both of the watchers in the room knew of the deep tragedy that had marked the turning-point in his life and had made him pass from a happy, hopeful man into the heartweary, but patient toiler he now was. As they worked over him, seeking to restore his spark of vitality. Mrs. Bates recalled how the wife of Hiram had succumbed to the inroads of fever and passed into the spirit world some fifteen years before, leaving him alone with their only child, a daughter, to care for. This girl was then not fifteen years old. Mrs. Bates remembered how well the maiden looked after her father's house while he attended to his labor in the shop, and the two of them continued to live cheerfully and contentedly together.

But how sad was the subsequent history of that poor child! Five years later, when Katie Turner had blossomed into a beautiful woman, the belle of her native village, Satan entered into her life, hidden behind the mask of a city gentleman. It was an easy matter for him to cast his evil spell about the unsophisticated girl while posing as a model of virtue.

"Poor, poor girl," sighed Mrs. Bates, as she tripped back and forth from one room to another, helping Sam as best she could. "What a sweet picture she made to be sure that morning the villain saw her coming home to her father's house singing as sweet as any bird."

Stepping along and swinging her sunbonnet in her hand she well merited the name he instantly gave her as he cried out in surprise, "By the gods what a flower in the wilderness she is!"

How the villain had pursued her to her father's door and later lodged there as a boarder, only to desert her after bequeathing her a legacy of shame was a story that had been told again and again in the village, when people saw the sorrowful form of Hiram pass the door with little Lillian holding on to his hand.

And from that time on, things went wrong with Hiram Turner. Katie had died with the birth of her child, leaving the heartbroken man alone with the baby, whom, for many, many days he would not see. But when finally he relented, urged along by his neighbor's persuasions, and took the little innocent babe in his arms, a new impulse for living seemed to stir within him. His heart went out to the small blossom, as the baby's wistful blue eyes fixed themselves steadily upon his gray hair. He took to whittling shapes out of blocks of wood then, to amuse her, and it was out of this pastime he had conceived the idea of following the trade that had marked his later life—that of a wood-turner; fans

and rosettes he made of such delicate design that no machinery could imitate or no lathe turn them out.

Mrs. Bates' eyes fell on the figure of Sam as she recalled this later incident, for it was just about this same time that Sam had made his sudden appearance in the village.

Late one stormy night he had entered their quiet settlement and settled in Palenville without telling any man from whence he came, his name or what business brought him there. To all who asked him he would reply, "Call me Sam—just plain Sam; that's good enough for me."

And being a happy-go-lucky fellow, doing good at all times, he soon endeared himself to the villagers, but it was on the baby Lillian and old Hiram that he lavished most of his time and affection.

CHAPTER II.

THE RED DEMON.

EDWARD HAHN had arrived at that stage in life where he could not be advised. Being the son of a New York broker whose wealth was written with seven figures, he had but to ask and every whim was granted. An automobile had been his last request, and an automobile appeared.

It was an easy matter after arriving at his father's summer home in the Catskill Mountains, to find plenty of lads willing and eager to be his companions on the cushioned seats of his automobile as he flew recklessly over hill and dale.

Like most boys of his type young Hahn chose the most daring of all his companions to accompany him on his fearless rides, and when they went off together they would urge on full steam. Will Harris was just such a lad, and he, with Edward, were the scourge of Palenville, in the red automobile.

The morning of the accident to Lillian Turner, as the boys tore along towards the village, Hahn

shouted, "Guess I had better slow her down a bit before we strike the village, what say?"

"Yes," shouted Will, bracing himself in the rocking car. "It is mail time now and there will be a good many people down by the post-office. What's the matter, Ed? You are as white as a sheet!"

"Can't move the lever. She's running away with us as sure as your name is Will Harris!" cried the lad, straining and throwing all his weight on the steel bar.

On they dashed, chickens, dogs and human beings scattering in all directions. On they went like a whirlwind, increasing speed at every bound over the stony road.

"Ed—Ed—there's a little girl in the road," cried Will, frantically, and then there was a queer crunching sound of the wheels before the runaway machine bounded forward and skidded to the right; there was a skewing of the heavy tires, a crash into the stone wall and all was dust and splinters; the red demon had run its last race. Will Harris was thrown over the stone wall and landed in a newly plowed field. Somewhat bruised and shaken he was still able to get up and climb over into the road.

For a moment he stood and surveyed the wreck, then his thoughts turned to his companion. What had become of Ed? One glance told its own story, some fifteen feet down the road lay Ed Hahn with a face deathly white.

Will ran to him and after listening to find if he was still breathing, turned towards the village to call for assistance, which was not long in coming, as the crash had been heard by the crowd in front of the post-office.

They laid the poor fellow on the grass by the side of the road to await the arrival of the doctor, and some one was sent to telephone his father. How long every minute seemed as they stood and looked compassionately on the dying boy!

Dr. Mumford at last arrived and knelt by his side. "This is a serious case," said he, calmly, "and the sooner we can have another physician to help me the better."

"Here comes his father, Doctor," called a bystander, and almost at the same moment Mr. Hahn, in his own racing automobile, with his chauffeur at the wheel, dashed up to the doctor. Not knowing what to expect and fearing the worst he had urged his man to drive at the highest speed, and his face, as he looked into that of the doctor's, was scarcely less white than his son's.

"He still lives, Mr. Hahn," said the doctor, "and my advice is to get him home as quickly as possible."

"Very good, Doctor! But I want you to come

right along with us. I will telegraph for Dr. Thorn, my own New York physician, to come up by a special train, but he cannot arrive before this evening; you must be with us when he comes."

"I will, sir."

Tenderly he lifted the unconscious youth and placed him in the tonneau.

"Do you think he is comfortable, Doctor?"

"As comfortable as is possible to make him here," Dr. Mumford assured him, "but the sooner he is in bed the better."

An anxious mother stood on the porch of the beautiful summer residence of the Hahns looking down the mountain side. Her face was the picture of despair as she leaned against a pillar and never took her eyes from the road which led to the village. Naturally a brave little woman, her strength of endurance was being tried to the limit as she waited for news of her son, her only child, and when at last she saw the red automobile coming and saw the doctor supporting her son in his arms she broke down and sobbed wildly.

They bore the lad to his own room, and she hung over his bed as if her heart would break.

Poor, wayward Ed! He was paying the price of his wilfulness. Carefully they put him into bed and Doctor Mumford did all he could to relieve him of pain and restore him to consciousness, but without seeming to make the least headway.

Having exhausted all his resources he turned to Mr. Hahn in despair. "I have done all I can do, at least at present, sir, and now I must return to that little girl whom he ran down."

- "Did my son run down a child?" asked Mr. Hahn, horrified.
 - "He did, sir."
- "Well, Doctor, I will accompany you to see her," Mr. Hahn said, decidedly, and struck the call-bell a resounding blow, which brought the old butler, James, to the room in a hurry.
 - "Has my machine been put away, James?"
 - "Yes, sir."
- "Have it brought around to the porch immediately."
 - "Yes, sir." The portly James saluted and retired.
- "Now, Doctor," said Mr. Hahn, as they got into the tonneau, "I want you to tell me about this child. Who is she?"
- "The granddaughter of Hiram Turner, the old wood-carver down on Main Street, sir."
 - "Is she badly injured?"
- "Well, sir, as far as I am able to see at present, a broken arm and some shaking up is the worst of it."

Then they flew, neither breaking silence again until they arrived in front of Hiram's house, when

the doctor jumped to the ground, saying, "Here we are, Mr. Hahn."

As they entered, Dr. Mumford inquired of Mrs. Bates how Hiram was getting along.

- "Hiram?" said Mr. Hahn, impatiently. "I thought you said it was a little girl who had met with the accident."
- "So it was, sir, so it was; but the shock was more than old Hiram, her grandfather, could stand."
- "So you have two patients here, Doctor, and I am to blame for it all for not taking better care of my boy! This is a crushing blow to me, Doctor; my own boy at death's door, and here I find two instead of one victim to account for."
- "Come this way, sir, if you would like to see Lillian," whispered Mrs. Bates, curtseying before the great city gentleman. Mr. Hahn followed her with his head bent forward and his spirit bowed down with sorrow. The child looked up at him with a sad smile.
- "Please, sir, don't touch this side. But I can shake hands with you with my right hand," she said, prettily.
- "Can you, my dear?—What a beam of sunshine you must be in your old grandfather's life! How I wish I had a little girl like you."
- "Grandpa has not been in to see me yet. Isn't that naughty of him?" she asked wistfully.

- "He will be in to see you by and by, dear; he is not feeling very well to-day, you know."
- "I am so sorry he is sick, for he told me just before that thing hit me that he felt as though he was only two years old."
- "Well, never mind now, dear. Aren't you glad to see me?"
 - "Yes; but I would rather have my grandfather."
- "So you would, my child; and that is right. You don't know me, but you do know grandpa and love him; that is right." As Mr. Hahn finished speaking he rose to leave the room. "Good-by, Lillian," said he, "I am coming to see you very often now, may I?"
- "Yes, sir, if grandpa don't mind. I never ask any one to come here unless grandpa says I may. Good-by, sir."
- Mr. Hahn passed from the room and motioned to Mrs. Bates to follow him; then gently closed the door.
- "Now, Mrs. Bates," he said, "you seem to have taken charge here of these unfortunate people, and I do not want you to stint yourself or them in anything whatsoever. You can look to me to pay all bills, do you understand?"
- "Yes, sir, I think I do, sir. It was your boy who caused this trouble?"

"Just so, Mrs. Bates; and I will do all in my power to make amends."

Mr. Hahn left the house, to return to the bedside of his injured son. Placing a chair at the head of the bed and taking his son's hand in his, Mr. Hahn sat there in silence, watching for any change in his condition that might be for good or bad. So absorbed was he in his patient vigil, he did not hear James enter the room nor was he aware of his presence until the old butler handed him a telegram.

Mr. Hahn opened it eagerly.

"Will come as fast as steam can bring me. Should arrive a little before seven. Everett Thorn."

"You hear, James? Dr. Thorn will be here a little before seven. See that some one is at the station to meet him." James withdrew deferentially.

Mrs. Hahn entered the sick room and took her place beside her husband. "You don't think he will die, Tom?" she asked, with quivering lips.

Before answering, Mr. Hahn put his arm around his wife and drawing her close to him gently kissed her.

"We must trust in the Lord, Bessie. He will carry us through. This is our first cloud, my dear, that has come to darken our lives. But black as it seems, it may have a silver lining, so do not despair, my brave little wife."

"Ah, but Tom, it seems so terrible; we cannot,

ŧ,

we must not lose him. See, Tom, he is all we have. The Lord would not punish us so cruelly. Oh, we three have been so happy together!" And she sobbed miserably.

"There, there, little woman, you must not give way like that. Dr. Thorn will be here directly, and perhaps can give us some encouragement."

And so the grief-stricken parents sat through that long day, side by side—the one trying to comfort the other and both feeling as though their hearts would break.

"Tom," said Mrs. Hahn, as the lights in the mountains shone out from the cottages one by one, "did you hear anything?"

"Yes, dear; it must be the doctor. I will go and see."

It was the doctor, and with him came Dr. Mumford, who had been waiting at the station, so that he could talk the case over with Dr. Thorn before arriving at the house.

The two medical men went directly to the sick room. Carefully they made their examination; together they weighed every possibility, took every chance into consideration, and when at last they turned to the eager father he thought he read the worst in their faces. With blanched cheeks he tottered back and would have fallen had not Dr. Mumford sprung forward to support him.

"No, no, Hahn," Dr. Thorn assured him, "it is not that: he will live, get well and strong. But, my old friend, I fear his mind will be gone. He struck full on the top of his head."

"Dr. Thorn, you say he will not die, but you pronounce a far worse fate for him. I could almost wish he were now dead, when I think of what is before him."

"You have your cross to bear, Hahn, and it remains to be seen if you will bear it like a man and a Christian."

"I will do my best, Doctor, though I cannot see why we should be thus afflicted. Don't tell my wife. Let me break this ghastly truth to her. Poor, poor Ed," he murmured, as he left the room.

For seven long and weary weeks, Edward Hahn lingered between life and death. Thanks to his magnificent physique and careful nursing, he finally did rally and cast behind him the shadow of the tomb.

Long before he was able to sit up, however, little Lillian Turner had completely recovered, and once more her happy voice filled the house with its merry prattle. Hiram never recovered from the shock he received, and after lingering on week after week he bade farewell to his many trials and disappointments and passed on to a brighter realm, where sorrow and shame could never more confront him, and

where peace and rest would atone for much that he had endured on earth.

At the news of his death one of the first to offer his assistance was Thomas Hahn. He took the little grandchild under his sheltering care and saw to it that her grandfather was laid away in such a manner as became an honest, hard-working follower of the Son of God.

Lillian's child heart almost broke with her grief and she at first refused to be comforted. Established in her new home the child found it very hard to accustom herself to the many servants and her fine surroundings. In fact, everything seemed strange to her. Her big blue eyes would stare in amazement as the portly James would bow before her and say, "Yes, Miss," or "No, Miss." Lillian imagined that he must be some great influential person with his fine clothes and bright, shining, brass buttons.

A governess was immediately secured for her and her young mind began to receive such training as would be required for the position in life which she would be called upon now to fill, for Mr. Hahn decided to adopt her as his own child.

As the summer had now gone, Mr. Hahn was anxious to resume his duties on the Stock Exchange, but first he wished to see to the comforts and necessities of his son, for Dr. Thorn's predictions had

been realized; the body was strong but the mind was weak.

After much deliberation he decided to leave Ed in their mountain home, and Sam, Lillian's faithful friend, though opposed to work, had accepted the position of looking after the lad.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Hahn, as he was preparing to leave Palenville, "I am trusting to you to see that my boy comes to no harm. You will have everything you need for your own welfare and his."

"All right, Mr. Hahn, I will take good care of him."

"Can you write, Sam?"

"Oh, I can throw a little ink, sir, when I am compelled to."

"That is good. I want you to send me a report every week and you will hear from me as often."

It was a sad leavetaking all around, for the first time in their lives Mr. and Mrs. Hahn were to be separated from their one child, and many were the farewells and bitter tears shed before they finally made a start for the station.

Little Lillian had crept so completely into the hearts of the Hahns that she went home with them gladly, and her sweet voice and childish simplicity assisted materially in shortening the time of the journey to the city home.

Lillian had often heard about the big city, but

now she was really going to see it herself! The little Miss was not satisfied with things on her own level, though there was plenty there that was new to her: she wanted to see the top of everything and bobbed up and down continually as they sped along the glistening rails. By the time she reached Mr. Hahn's house she complained of a pain in the back of her neck and said she thought "it must be the city air that made her neck sick." But she was too busy taking in new delights to think much of her indisposition and the first familiar sight to greet her eyes was the portly James, who had preceded them to open the house and now stood at the door before her in all his glory. She greeted him jubilantly and flew over the house after him, greatly to his discomfiture.

On the following day, books were laid aside, as a general holiday had been declared for Lillian's benefit. In the afternoon, Nina, the governess, having a little shopping to do on her own account, took advantage of this opportunity to take her pupil down town.

As they neared Sixth Avenue, Lillian took a firm hold of her hand and, with a frightened look, exclaimed: "Oh, Miss Nina, there must be something the matter. Look at all those people running!"

"No, dear," explained her governess, "they are not running! They are just what we call shoppers.

They come here to the stores to buy, just like you and I."

"But, Miss Nina, where do they all come from? They couldn't all live in New York."

"Yes, they could, and in a very small part of the city. You see, my dear, a great many people live in one house here, and the houses are built one against the other."

Lillian's brain was working fast. Never before, in all her life put together, had she seen so many people; and what seemed stranger to her than all, was, that she did not know a single face among the crowd—while in Palenville she had known every one! On they went until they turned into one of the large department stores. Lillian could scarcely contain herself; her eyes were everywhere.

"Miss Nina," said she, "this is ever so much nicer than the fairs we used to have. Do they have them here once a year?"

"This is not a fair, dear, it is just a store like Mr. Jackson's at home only much larger."

"Does it stay here all the time?"

"Yes, all the time."

"And do people keep buying things all the time?"

"Yes, dear."

"Well, what do they do with all the things they buy, Miss Nina?"

"Well, it depends upon what they buy. The

dresses they wear, the groceries they eat and the furniture they put in their houses."

"I shouldn't think they would have any place big enough to put all the things, if they keep on buying all the time," said Lillian thoughtfully.

Nina did not hear, or pretended not to, as she was now busily engaged selecting a pair of gloves and could not decide whether a tan or a gray pair would be the better to go with her gown. Then she made a few more purchases, and the business of the day was done. Nina next concluded to take Lillian up to Central Park for her to see the children at play. After strolling for some minutes, up one path and down another, Lillian's eyes brightened and her face beamed with pleasure.

"Oh, Miss Nina," she exclaimed rapturously, "I like this New York so much better than that other one, where everybody can't wait."

"Do you, dear? Well, it is all the same New York—only different parts of it. Perhaps some day I can take you down town, where Mr. Hahn makes all his money."

"Is that what Mr. Hahn does?" asked Lillian with wide open eyes. "I heard grandpa say once, that there were some men in Palenville who were making money and they were all arrested and sent to prison. They won't send Mr. Hahn to prison, will they, Miss Nina?"

"No, dear, I trust not. The men your grandfather told you about made bad money and cheated the people: that is the reason they were punished and sent to prison, but Mr. Hahn makes nice money like we spent to-day."

Nina did not care to have her pupil see the bad side of life and have her young mind poisoned with tales of crime and retribution, so she deftly changed the subject, calling Lillian's attention to a robin which seemed very tame and hopped along almost within their reach.

"Oh, isn't he sweet!" exclaimed Lillian. "Do you know, Miss Nina, I used to feed a robin that had a nest in our backyard. He would fly down and pick up the crumbs I threw to him. I'm sure he knew me, too; for if any one else came around he would fly away."

"Yes, dear, birds and animals are just like human beings. If you are kind to them, they will love you and want to be near you."

"I used to love my Fido, and I am sure that he loved me. Do you think that Mr. Hahn would let me have my Fido down here?"

"You might ask him; but I don't think Fido would be happy here: he would not have any green fields to play in."

"Then I wouldn't want to bring him, if he would

not be happy," said Lillian decidedly. "He can stay with Sam."

Lillian's mind ran back over the many romps she had had on her native hills, and she compared that time with the present. Now she had to be careful; it seemed to her that she had to have her face washed twenty times a day and her frock changed as often, and then she ran about free as the air of Heaven.

"Don't you like Palenville, Miss Nina?" she asked, softly—"I just love it."

"Yes, dear, I like Palenville very much, and perhaps Mr. Hahn will take us up there next summer."

"Oh, do you think so, Miss Nina? I'm always happy there." Then she added wistfully, "But my granddaddy won't be there any more."

"Your grandfather is in a much prettier place now, dear. Perhaps some day, if you are a good little girl, you will go there to meet him."

"Miss Nina, what is Heaven like?" the child asked suddenly.

"Heaven, Lillian? Well, I hardly know how to describe it to you. We are told it is the home of the angels who sing from morning until night. Every one is so happy there! The beautiful streets are paved with gold; and all who enter at the pearly gates find peace and rest."

- "Miss Nina, I think I should like to go to Heaven now," Lillian said decidedly.
- "You will go, dear, when the Lord calls you to join his chosen flock. Just now He wants you to stay here and comfort poor Mr. Hahn."

The conversation was getting very serious now for Lillian. Her face had lost its happy expression, and when she returned to her new home, she went directly to her own room and took out her little Bible, the gift of her grandfather, and there in silence and alone, she read of the Promised Land—"where grandfather lived."

CHAPTER III.

"A WOMAN IN THE CASE."

MR. HAHN had entered Wall Street when he was a mere lad. He had had his future to make and had determined to make it right there.

With this end in view he was all attention, quick and accurate; it was a rare thing for "Tom" Hahn to have to retrace his steps or do over that which he had undertaken. He commenced to save a little out of each week's salary, and by the time he had arrived at the age of twenty-one he had laid by the snug little fortune of one thousand dollars, and, better still, he held a good position and had the entire respect and confidence of his employer.

With a confidence born of familiarity he then entered the field of speculation. Being trained in the business, he was able to discriminate, to some extent, between the false and the true ring of the gossip which so often sends the enthusiastic lamb out into the cold world wondering why he was born.

There, meeting occasional losses, but more often

gain, was the fortunate lot of Mr. Hahn. At thirty, he had connected himself with the house of Finn & Quay, bankers and brokers. At forty he acquired a seat on the Exchange, and when we made his acquaintance, at the age of forty-six, he was a man feared by his enemies, loved by his friends and respected by all.

As he entered his office on the morning after his return from the mountains Mr. Hahn found his partners in earnest conversation: it was evident that something was wrong.

After receiving and extending a hearty greeting, Mr. Finn informed him that he had just received word of a rumor on the street that the bears were organizing a raid on C. P. and that they, the firm of Finn, Quay & Co., were heavy holders in C. P. stock. What did Mr. Hahn think it advisable to do in the matter?

Mr. Hahn's brow darkened as he listened. "You say this is only a rumor, Mr. Finn?"

"So far, yes; but our information comes from a reliable source and for my part, I do not think we should sit still and wait until the crash comes."

"Will you leave this matter to me, gentlemen?" asked Mr. Hahn. "I will go over to-day and investigate this rumor and keep a careful watch. We can see which way the wind blows, as soon as the dust begins to fly."

Ten o'clock found Mr. Hahn on the floor of the Stock Exchange. Thoroughly alert to the interests of his house, he bought and sold in his accustomed manner, as the orders were brought by the messenger boy.

In all that excited, busy throng, no one there knew under what strain Tom Hahn was performing his duties that day. Circling around, first in one group and then in another, he seemed to be everywhere.

Gathering a word here, a syllable there, Hahn distinctly heard the rumble of the coming storm: C. P. was certainly to be the butt of a fierce attack. How soon it would come none could tell, but come it would!

If the bears were successful in pounding C. P. down to the point they were evidently anticipating, the house of Finn, Quay & Co. would be ruined. Persuasion would do nothing; intimidation was out of the question; to commence to unload now would only precipitate matters and give the bears an additional weapon to use against them. There was nothing to do but "wait."

Day after day the storm clouds grew darker. The speculators became weary and withdrew from the market, leaving the professionals in the field. It was to be a war of giants.

On Friday, the thirteenth day of September, the storm broke; the bears rushed upon the floor shout-

ing and gesticulating wildly. It seemed as if the house had gone mad. Tom Hahn stood leaning against the C. P. post as calm and composed as though at an evening banquet. He seemed to be oblivious of the yelling throng, until the rap of the chairman's gavel announced to him that the time for business had arrived.

Have you ever witnessed a railroad strike or the stampede of a herd of cattle? If so, you can in a measure at least realize what happened on the floor of the Stock Exchange that thirteenth day of September, and what a beautiful sight it was to see, in the midst of such a whirlwind of excitement, torrents of passion, and spasms of fear, one man, built in the image of his Maker, who standing alone, fearless and erect, seemed to be the master of these giants.

C. P. had opened at 123. In less than twenty minutes it had hammered down to 75. Block after block of stock was offered at receding quotations. Many a man in that gathering turned pale as he saw his last prop swept from beneath him; many a life had been blasted by the time C. P. struck 75.

"Who is that buying now?" was the question passed round.

"Hahn. He seems as eager to buy as the others are to sell!"

One hundred—five hundred—a thousand shares

were gathered in by this man, and still he seemed anxious to buy all the C. P. that was offered.

A buzz of excitement ran through the assembled brokers as Mr. Hahn kept piling up share upon share. One broker was heard to say that "Hahn had seen his best days." Another said that "the fools were not all dead yet." Another suggested that they have a guardian appointed for Hahn. And thus they hurled their chaff at the only man who now had the courage to buy C. P.

No one knew better than the man himself that at every moment he was becoming more deeply involved: that it was a game of bluff he played and should he be called, he was a ruined man. The game was lasting longer than he had anticipated; he had bought many more shares now than he could ever dream of paying for; and still the bears held the field!

Would he have to give up and go to the wall? He tightened his lips, and holding his head high, elbowed his way through the crowd. If it was defeat he would leave the room with his accustomed easy stride, and not show the white feather to his opponents.

Half way to the door, he turned and cast his eyes over the many faces peering down upon him from the balcony. A tiny hand shot over the rail, and

a face beaming with smiles sent him a greeting he had not looked for.

For a moment Hahn gazed on the beautiful face of his adopted child, then grinding his teeth together he whirled about and faced the now frenzied throng.

"What," cried one of the brokers, "are you coming back for more?"

"Yes," answered Hahn grimly, "Tom Hahn is coming back for more, and will take all the C. P. you can produce."

At this moment a young broker, who had taken no part in the fight but had stood at some distance looking on, dashed forward, calling at the same time to his friends: "Look out, fellows. Hahn has something up his sleeve. His backer is up in the gallery; I just saw him wave his hand to Hahn to come back and buy."

This information fell like a bomb among the bears. Those with the weakest knees who had shouted the loudest, were the first to seek cover: one after another they swung over to the bulls. Tom Hahn saw his advantage and was quick to make the best of it. Shouting as loud as he could, he called for more C. P.; but not a share was offered.

All those who had sold short—and there were many of them—now wanted to buy. The price went up with jumps and bounds, and many a man, who had derided Hahn not ten minutes ago, was now



Smithers was immediately surrounded

Teller en en



begging and beseeching him to part with some of his stock.

"Boys," said Hahn blandly, "I have no desire to crowd any of you out. I will sell a little of my stock at par; the rest I will have to hold."

The tide had turned. Hahn was the lion of the day. All eyes were bent on him, as he waved back this mass of screaming humanity, all eager to buy.

He had checked the downward flight of C. P. Nay, more: he had caused the price of that stock to rebound and even now it was soaring higher and higher, yet he dared offer very little of his vast holdings lest the tide once more turn against him.

Too shrewd a man to be caught in such a trap, he sent word to his firm to have Smithers & Co. dispose of some of their C. P., but not to hit it too heavy at the start.

As Mr. Smithers entered the Exchange he directed his steps towards Mr. Hahn, at the same time calling out 300 shares of C. P. as though he expected that gentleman would take them.

Mr. Hahn smiled and waved his hand to the crowd. "Now, boys," said he, "there is an opportunity for some of you; go in."

Smithers was immediately surrounded. Coats and vests were torn to shreds in the endeavor to retrieve the losses. Pushed and jostled, crowded this way and that, with the breath nearly squeezed

out of him, Mr. Smithers finally succeeded in extricating himself and feebly called out that he had some more C. P. but if they were going to kill him he would be unable to sell it.

Moderation was exercised to a certain degree: a dead man would do them no good; but C. P. they must have. There were many there to buy, but only one man to sell. Thus, as one sale succeeded another, the stock was scattered and no one seemed to realize the actual amount being disposed of. Mr. Smithers was receiving orders from his office, messenger boys were flying back and forth; it all looked genuine.

Once during the whirl and bustle, one broker asked his neighbor where Smithers was getting all his C. P. from. The reply was that he represented out-of-town people mostly, and he supposed these were belated orders. The reply seemed to be satisfactory, for the first speaker bought more C. P.

Before the day closed Mr. Hahn had disposed of practically all of his holdings in C. P. Millions had been won and lost in this great gamble between the hours of ten and three; yet the only man who seemed happy and satisfied as the brokers dispersed to their several offices was Tom Hahn. The victory was his, all his; though in reality he was not the real factor in this making of millions. His silent backer in the gallery, that curly headed child, had

been the means of completely upsetting the thoroughly organized plans of the bears!

Mr. Hahn's eyes sparkled and it was plain to be seen under what tension of excitement he had been laboring, now that the strain was over and he had relaxed into his normal self.

He entered his office with a bound and extending both hands to his partners fairly yelled in their faces: "Gentlemen, we are saved. We have done the best day's business in the history of this house."

"Yes," said Mr. Finn, "you have done nobly, and Mr. Quay and myself acknowledge ourselves under a great obligation to you for your cool head and the masterly manner in which you have conducted this affair from beginning to end."

"You are under no obligation to me, gentlemen. I was discouraged, crushed and beaten, and was leaving the floor a ruined man, when I received my inspiration. Some day I will introduce to you the person who gave me the courage to renew the fight."

"If that is the case, sir," said Mr. Finn, "we should not only acknowledge our debt by mere words, but I would suggest that we set aside a portion of our gain for his benefit."

"That is very kind of you, Mr. Finn; but in this instance it is not a he, but a she, who came to our assistance."

"What! A woman in the case, Hahn? Leave

them alone, old man. I've known many a man to go up against that rock and be shipwrecked."

"Well," said Mr. Hahn, "no matter what other men have done, I am not going to drop this one, and when she is presented to you I feel sure you will say that I am right."

"If she is such a charmer as all that, you had better keep her away from here," said Mr. Quay. "Finn, there, notwithstanding his good advice, has a soft side for the ladies."

"That is the way with most of these advisers," responded Mr. Hahn. "But even if he is an Adonis, I will take my chances with him in this instance."

"Say, Hahn," said Mr. Finn, "give us her name, will you?"

"No, sir; and what is more you do not get another bit of information from me. You can question the little lady herself as much as you please."

With this parting shot, Mr. Hahn, tired out, left the office for his home. Mr. Finn and Mr. Quay tarried for some time to discuss the affairs of the day; but they soon drifted into Mr. Hahn's love affair, as they termed it.

"I'm sorry to see Hahn get mixed up in a thing like this," said Mr. Finn. "When these women get into a man's head it soon knocks business out."

"Look here, Finn; I don't believe there is any-

thing in this. No man with a woman in his head could have turned the trick Hahn did to-day."

"Well, I hope you are right, Quay; for he certainly is too good a fellow to go wrong like that. It would be a great loss to us if he should get mixed up in any trouble."

While being thus discussed Mr. Hahn pursued his weary journey up town, and when at last he entered his own house, he called immediately for Lillian.

Nina sent the child down to him, wondering if she had made a mistake in taking her to the Stock Exchange. She stole carefully to the head of the stairs to listen. Her mind was soon relieved; for Mr. Hahn, advancing to meet Lillian, took her in his arms and tenderly kissed her.

"My little girl," he said, "not long ago you came into my life and brought with you sunshine and happiness. The old house would hardly be worth keeping with only Mrs. Hahn and myself here. One child had been separated from us, but another one was given us—not to take his place, that could never be, but to keep us from feeling the loneliness which would have been ours had you not come among us. To-day, Lillian, you did a still greater thing for us. Had I not seen your little face in the balcony this morning we would no longer be able to live here, nor do I know what would have become of us. You gave me courage to-day, little

one; and now I am a much richer man than ever before. So you see, Lillian, to you we owe a great deal, and I am going to give you enough money in your own name to take care of you as long as you live. Then, if ever I have any more trouble such as I had to-day and do not succeed in pulling through, you, at least, will be provided for."

"Thank you, sir; but I didn't know I did anything," said Lillian, wonderingly, clinging to his neck with her soft little arms.

"No, I suppose not," said Mr. Hahn, "but some day when you grow up you will understand how this little hand of yours upset the plans of great men. Now, give me a kiss and run upstairs."

Mrs. Hahn had always made it a rule to join her husband as soon as she was aware of his presence in the house, and as Lillian ran out of the room and upstairs she entered the library where her husband was still seated. Encircling his neck with her arms, she slid into his lap, quietly.

"Tom, dear," said she, "I heard what you just said to Lillian, and know we have been near some dreadful calamity. Tell me all about it. I have shared your pleasures and prosperity; if you have any trials or troubles, let me carry my share."

"The troubles have all passed, dear wife, you but heard the echo of them." Then he told her of all that had happened that day on the floor. Bessie sat a patient listener, and when the tale was finished she took her husband's swarthy cheeks between her dainty jeweled hands and looking straight into his eyes, said:

"Tom, do you remember what you said as we sat by the side of poor Edward's bed, that awful day last summer?"

"No, Bessie; I was too overcome with grief then to remember anything."

"You were not so overcome, Tom, but that you wished to comfort me. How well I remember it word for word! 'This is the first cloud, my dear, that has ever darkened our lives. Dark though it seems, it may have a silver lining.' Don't you remember now, Tom? and see how truthfully you spoke. Only our little Lillian has been more than a silver lining, she has been pure gold to us."

The sun had set, and darkness was fast closing in about the earth. Mr. and Mrs. Hahn seemed not to notice the change. They sat there, calling up the memories of other days, living again, over and over, their young love.

Love, constant love, ripened by years of close association had quickened their pulses and warmed their blood and knitted their souls closer together.

CHAPTER IV.

WILL'S VISIT.

WILL HARRIS had always been a frequent caller at the Hahn's town house when Ed, the son, was at home and he was very gallant now in performing his duty of inquiring for the unfortunate boy's condition.

We are not prepared to say, however, that the black-eyed governess was not responsible to some extent for the many calls since his late return to the city. Certain it was that during the Hahns' stay in the mountains these two had often been seen together there.

On one of these many occasions when he called, Nina saw him and his conversation lengthened out considerably. He talked on many things, gradually coming back to the thing that brought him to the house the morning of the accident in the mountains.

"Do you know, Miss Cosgrove, that ever since Ed was injured I seem to have lost all taste for outdoor sport," he said slowly.

- "Why do you call me by my last name, Mr. Harris? Every one around here calls me Nina and I wish you would also," the governess replied naively.
- "Well," said Will cheerfully, "I will make a bargain with you. You call me Will and I will call you Nina. Is it a go?"
- "I would rather call you Mr. Harris," she demurred. "You belong to a different station in life from mine you know."
- "Oh bother the station. I would rather judge persons by what they are than by where they are," he answered her warmly.
- "Well, Mr. Harris, so far as my people are concerned I assure you I have nothing to be ashamed of."
- "There you go again; 'Mr. Harris'. I see you do not intend to accept my compact, Miss Cosgrove; and I suppose I must attribute it to personal reasons."
- "No, no, do not say that; on the contrary, it is because I respect you so much—But if you really wish it—Will——I will call you 'Will'."

Harris gently seized her hand and gave it a tender squeeze and pressed it to his lips.

"There, Nina, that seals the bargain, 'Nina' you will always be to me."

The governess' black eyes flashed as she gave him her hand in token of their friendship.

- "Nina," said Will, "do you know that I never used to regret coming back from the mountains to the city but now things seem so different!"
- "I do not see why," she said quietly. "But then I know very little about the ways of men; I have come in contact with so few of them. Sometimes I wish I were a man myself," she finished rapidly.
- "You do? Well, I don't. I wouldn't give two straws for you, Nina, if you were a man. It is just because you are such a sweet, pure little girl that I...eh...like you so much."
- "Then I suppose I shall have to be done up in a package of tinfoil and labelled a woman. Pshaw, what nonsense! I am tired of being held down by sex."

For some moments neither spoke. A gentle pressure of the hand—we might call it soul telepathy—was all that passed between them. At last Will said:

- "Do you intend staying with the Hahns, Nina?"
- "I hope so. I am sure I do not know what I should do otherwise—go into one of these horrid stores, I suppose."
- "You shall never do that,—not while I live," he replied stoutly.
 - "Not so fast, young man. What right have you

to say what I shall or shall not do?" Her black eyes gleamed as she faced him.

- "I beg your pardon, Nina. I did not mean it in the way of interference; but it would make me feel very badly to see you behind one of those counters it is such a hard life."
- "Even so, Will. A girl cannot always choose what she is going to do; she must do the first thing that comes to her hand."
- "I guess in that respect, at least, they are no different from the men," said Will. "But why I asked about your staying with the Hahns was, I wanted to know where you would be this winter."
- "I would naturally have supposed that to be the reason. In fact I don't see how you could have manufactured any other."
- "Now, look here, Nina, you are cross to-night about something and seem bent on taking it out of me."
- "Well, you can't expect a girl to be angelic all the time, can you?"
- "No, I suppose not. But then it is so unlike you. Nina, have I done anything to vex or displease you?"
- "Not in particular. But somehow I feel blue tonight."
- "Nina, will you let me come to see you? Promise me that."

"Yes, Will, I promise, and what is more I will be glad to see you always. Now, good-night."

This was the beginning of many such calls and Mrs. Hahn grew to look forward to Will's visits, appreciating deeply the thoughtfulness that sent him anxious to her doors with inquiries regarding her poor, weak son.

CHAPTER V.

THE ESCAPE.

As for Edward Hahn, his condition was pitiable. For many nights strange noises had been heard around the house, and Sam, though by no means a coward, commenced to feel uneasy. Morning after morning he had searched the grounds in the vicinity of the house in the hope of finding some clew, yet on each occasion he returned more mystified than before.

It might be the tread of some wild animal; but that would not be an unfamiliar sound to Sam, who had spent many a night in the woods. Should he speak to the women folk about it? He thought not.

Mrs. Pierce, the housekeeper, was a middle-aged lady. She had been a widow for ten years, and considered herself very fortunate in having secured a position in Mrs. Hahn's household. Faithful and honest as she proved herself to be, Mrs. Hahn had given her entire charge of the place, so she, with Susie, a maid-of-all-work, were the only women in

the big summer house and Sam was afraid that he would have to part with their company if he told them of his suspicions.

One stormy evening Mrs. Pierce was sitting quietly in the library, her knitting needles flying back and forth, the yarn fast forming into the shape of some useful garment, and Sam, as was his custom, was making the rounds of the house to see that everything was secure for the night. As he entered the library Mrs. Pierce looked up from her work and said:

"This is a terrible night, Sam, and I pity any poor soul who has not a comfortable fireside to sit by."

"Well," said Sam, "I guess there won't be many people stirring about this night: it's kind of chilly even for this time of the year. Just been up to see if Ed was all right."

"Aren't you afraid to sleep in the same room with him?" asked Mrs. Pierce softly.

"No, can't say that I am. He never moves that I don't hear him."

"Do you know, Sam-"

With a startled scream, Mrs. Pierce sprang to her feet. A changed expression had come over her face; and standing there, trembling with fear, she cried out:

"Look, Sam, look!"

And she pointed at the same time to the low window directly opposite.

Somewhat startled, Sam turned around. But all he could see was the low window, with the shade drawn down about half way and the slats of the outside shutters open.

Mrs. Pierce had taken a firm hold of Sam's arm for protection as well as support.

- "Did you see it, Sam?" she gasped.
- "No, I didn't see anything. What scared you?"
- "I saw two eyes peering in at us through the window like two balls of fire, and as soon as I jumped to my feet they disappeared."
- "Guess you must be a bit nervous to-night, Mrs. Pierce. 'Tain't likely any one is going out a night like this just to look in that window at us."
- "I wish I were mistaken, Sam; but I am sure of what I saw and you could not get me to sit in this room alone again, at night, not if you were to give me the whole house. Then, too, maybe I am nervous, for I don't like the looks of that man that's been a-hanging around here for the last two or three weeks."
 - "What man?" asked Sam, suspiciously.
- "Why, didn't Susie tell you that we have seen a strange man about here lately?"
 - "No," said Sam; "what did he look like?"
 - "Well, I can scarcely tell you, for he would

hardly ever let us see his face; but I know he had a villainous looking pair of dark eyes. His eyebrows are heavy and he has a big black moustache that hangs down at the ends."

- "How big a man do you take him to be, Mrs. Pierce?"
- "I can't just say; but he is a much larger man than you are, Sam."
- "Gosh! he must be a big one, then; for I'm five feet, eleven inches myself. But I wish you could give me a better description of him. How was he dressed?"
- "He had on a slouch hat and a long coat. The coat looked old, as though it had been worn a long time."
- "Well," said Sam, "that ain't much of a description to go hunting for a fellow with, when nine out of ten men you meet have a slouch hat and a long coat on, and there's mighty few of them that ain't pretty well worn, unless you happen to be looking on a Sunday morning. I'm going to do a little watching myself now, and if you see him again, just you call me."

Sam did watch, but to no use, as the man could never be seen when he was around, but hardly would his back be turned, than he would be seen skulking among the trees.

On one occasion, Mrs. Pierce determined to con-

front the intruder and, if possible, find out what he wanted. But the "will o' the wisp" was not to be interviewed. No sooner had Mrs. Pierce started towards him when he took to his heels and was lost to sight in the dense woods.

The matter was becoming very serious, and as each day added to the strain, the women folks were becoming more and more nervous. What was to be done? That question was often asked, but a solution of the mystery had not been reached as yet.

Did this strange man intend to rob the house? If that were his motive, why had he not attempted it? Was he in the employ of some secret enemy? and yet who could this enemy be and for what purpose was he having the house watched? These questions and many others were considered, but could not be solved.

Sam determined to lay in wait for the intruder; so after attending to Ed one night he waited until dark, then arming himself with a pistol he crawled on hands and knees until he reached the wood-shed and there he took up his position, on the alert to jump at the least sound.

The screech of an owl caused him to start violently. Never before had the earth seemed so dark and still to him. He heard the crackling of some twigs and thought he could dimly distinguish something creeping toward the house. Crouched low,

Sam followed, keeping as far away as he could, yet careful not to lose sight of the crawling object for a single moment.

On they came—every second bringing them nearer the house.

"Whoever you are," thought Sam, "we shall know more about you directly. It's the window, is it? Up to your old tricks, eh? Well, you can have your turn now; then I shall have mine."

The creeping object just ahead had come to a halt and was evidently listening intently, as not a motion of his body could be detected. Sam gradually and stealthily decreased the distance that lay between them, then paused! Should he wait to see what the thing's next move would be, or should he step out with his revolver and demand the meaning of these nightly visits?

He chose the latter, and taking firm hold on his pistol, he stepped forward, at the same time calling out:

"What do you want there? Hands up!"

"Baa," was the only answer Sam received, and Sam fell back with a laugh. He had been following a black sheep! Stepping forward he placed his hand on the woolly head, and said:

"Well, brother, I have been in your fix more than once. They always called me a black sheep; so I don't see how I can blame you for being one," and he led the sheep to an out-house. "There, sir," said he. "You can keep warm there for to-night, and to-morrow you can find your way home."

Sam entered the house and found Mrs. Pierce and Susie huddled together in the hall.

"Did you get him, Sam?" asked Mrs. Pierce softly.

"Yes," said Sam. "I got him fast enough this time."

"You didn't kill him, did you, Sam?" she cried.

"Kill him? No, what would I kill him for?"

"But what did you do with him?" Susie implored, clasping her hands together.

"Just put him in the out-house there."

"In the out-house! Good Lord, Sam! he will set the place afire and burn us up," screamed Mrs. Pierce.

"I guess not," said Sam; "but I suppose you women ought to go out and take a look at him, and see if I have the right fellow. It wouldn't be right, you know, to keep an innocent fellow tied up there all night."

"I'm not going out to look at any man to-night," said the good woman decidedly; "and, Susie, you be sure and lock your door and bolt yourself in."

"Well," said Sam with a laugh, "you needn't be afraid of that fellow, ladies: he's as meek as a lamb."

He chuckled as the women folk trudged off to

their rooms to make themselves secure against the terrible man locked up in the out-house. "I guess they won't have much of a laugh on me in the morning," thought he. And when morning came, and Sam produced his prisoner, the women were very angry and upbraided him soundly, it never occurring to them that poor Sam had been fooled as badly as they!

A week went by, and nothing further transpired to disturb the aroused household. The strange man had not been seen, and there was great rejoicing at the prospect of being rid of him altogether.

This peace of mind was not long enjoyed, however, for on the eighth night after Sam captured his sheep, he was awakened from his slumbers by loud cries for help from another part of the house.

Sam sprang from his bed and hastily pulling on his trousers flung open the door and rushed to the apartments of Mrs. Pierce, who by this time was making the welkin ring with her screams and cries for assistance.

Pausing at the door, Sam asked what was the matter.

"Oh," said Mrs. Pierce, "that man is in the house. I heard him and he tried my door."

"Everything looks all right out here, Mrs. Pierce; but I will search the house, if it will make you feel any easier."

Sam started out systematically. He took a lamp from the hall table and proceeded to the attack, looking in every nook and corner; then he searched the rooms on the second floor, assisted by Mrs. Pierce and Susie, who by this time had gotten on their clothes and ventured forth.

- "Are you sure, Mrs. Pierce, that you heard something?" asked Sam, pausing before her.
- "Positive, Sam. First I heard a creaking sound like a board squeaking; then I listened and distinctly heard a muffled tread, like a man walking on tiptoe. I thought it might possibly be you, but when a hand took hold of the knob of my door and tried to turn it, I screamed as loud as I could."
 - "Did you hear him run away?" asked Sam.
- "No; I was screaming so I could not have heard anything."

Sam searched every room on that floor except his own: he knew the man was not in his room.

"We might as well go downstairs and take a look around there," he said, and led the way down the front stairway.

Room after room they entered, without discovering anything wrong.

- "Have you tried the doors, Sam?" asked Mrs. Pierce all a tremble.
- "No. Guess there's not much use, as I locked them before I went to bed."

As they entered the kitchen, the sharp eye of Mrs. Pierce detected a bolt slid back on the door leading out into the yard.

"Are you sure, Sam, that you locked all up last night?" asked Mrs. Pierce.

"Yes, ma'am, you never knew me to miss it, did you?"

"No; but look at that door; it is not bolted now. So you see some one has been in here."

Sam went over to the door: it was unlocked. "Susie," said he, "you were in the kitchen when I locked up, don't you remember?"

"Yes, sir, I do," said Susie. Her fears returning, she began to whimper and looked ready to collapse.

"Now, see here, Mrs. Pierce," said Sam examining the door carefully, "a man might have gone out of this door, but he never came in here; for he could not push back these bolts from the outside."

"How did he get in then, Sam?"

"Don't know; but I suppose I will have to look until I find out."

Sam once more bolted the kitchen door and led the way through the rooms for the second time. As they entered Mr. Hahn's den, or smoking-room, Sam happened to think of a window over which hung a portiere: he started to inspect this window.

As he reached out his hand, the portiere was suddenly flung aside, and a man sprang full upon Sam, knocking him down. As he fell, Sam dropped the lamp, which naturally exploded, setting fire to the room.

The man never looked back to see what the condition of things was behind him, but dashed upstairs and, flinging open a door, stepped out on the balcony. Here he paused a moment to listen; then plunging over the side he disappeared.

After recovering from the shock Sam scrambled to his feet and started to fight the fire. Gathering up the rugs he threw them on the burning oil and succeeded in smothering the flames. Mrs. Pierce, meanwhile, never ceased yelling "fire," "police," "murder," at the top of her lungs. As for Susie, she lay a senseless mass in the hall, having been actually frightened into unconsciousness.

"For heaven's sake, Mrs. Pierce, shut up!" said Sam, fumbling in the dark. "You have all the help right here that you are likely to get."

"Oh, Sam, what has become of him?" she wailed, and started to scream again.

"I don't know, but wait until I get a match and strike a light."

"Hurry, hurry, Sam, I am afraid he will come back," she cried, huddling herself against the wall and covering her head with her apron.

Sam was fumbling around the mantel and finally found the matches. He struck one and lighted an-

other lamp, the light of which seemed to arouse Susie, for no sooner had the pale rays fallen on her face when she opened her eyes and commenced to do her share of the screaming.

"Shut up!" commanded Sam, "or I'll push a sofa pillow down your throat. That's all you women seem good for—to scream and holler."

Mrs. Pierce took no notice of his remarks, but uncovering her eyes peeped cautiously down the hall. Not seeing any one there she ventured along. Hardly had she done so when a shiver passed through her frame, and turning to Sam, she said:

"There must be a window open, Sam; this hall is awfully cold."

"I'll look," said Sam, decidedly, and taking up the lamp he started for the second floor.

"This playing hide-and-seek with a fellow before daylight is not my style of hunting," he commented.

"Well, you don't expect us to do it all alone, do you?" demanded Mrs. Pierce, loudly.

"Lord, no, Mrs. Pierce; no one will ever accuse you or Susie of hunting for a man in the dark."

Sam found the hall door open. "You hold the light a moment, Mrs. Pierce," said he, "while I take a look out here."

At first all looked black to him. As he left the bright light of the lamp a moment and he was able to distinguish the rail around the balcony, suddenly, he saw something projecting above it. He darted forward and there he found a solution of it all: a ladder leaning against the balcony had been the means used by the man to enter and leave the house.

The man had had plenty of time to make good his escape, and Sam knew there would be no use in attempting to follow him now. He would take good care, however, in the future, to lock the balcony door and have the ladder in safe keeping.

"Well," he said, as he re-entered the hall, "I guess we might as well go to bed. That fellow will not bother us any more to-night."

"Why, Sam; I don't see how you can even talk about going to bed," said Mrs. Pierce, beginning to weep softly. "I could no more think of going to sleep than flying."

"Flying's not much in my line, Mrs. Pierce," Sam retorted. "So if you folks are going to sit up, I'll say good-night."

"Come, Susie," said Mrs. Pierce. "You must come with me; I don't want to be alone."

"Yes, ma'am," Susie answered, moistening her pale lips. "I am only too glad to go with you. My room is so far away from the rest of you."

The two women entered Mrs. Pierce's room; but hardly had they closed the door when they heard Sam coming back, calling as loud as he could, "Mrs. Pierce, Mrs. Pierce, open the door."

Mrs. Pierce complied with Sam's request, wondering what new developments had turned up. There stood Sam, his face whiter than the shirt he wore. "Ed's gone!" was all he seemed able to say.

"Ed's gone?" repeated Mrs. Pierce. "Why wasn't he in bed when you left your room?"

"Yes; but while we were searching the house he must have escaped: that's how the kitchen door came to be unlocked."

"What are you going to do, Sam?" she said, facing him with eyes wide with fright.

"Do!" was the answer. "There is only one thing to do that I know of; and that is to go out and look for him."

"You had better send word to Mr. Hahn the first thing in the morning," counseled Mrs. Pierce.

"I might find him," objected Sam; "and then Mr. Hahn would never know about this night's work."

"Yes, Sam, that's all very good, providing you do find him. But suppose you don't? Then Mr. Hahn would never forgive you."

"Guess you're right, Mrs. Pierce; though I hate to meet him after letting Ed give me the slip."

Sam muffled himself up well, for the nights were very cold, and started out to scour the woods around the house. How often he wished he had a good dog with him, to help track Ed, as well as for company.

Sam wandered over the beaten paths. At frequent intervals he would call Ed's name with all his might. Not a sound could he hear, save, occasionally, the barking of a dog in the distance, which no doubt had been aroused by Sam's shouts.

Deeper and deeper into the forest he plunged, now to the right and now to the left, beating the brush all the while in hope that Ed might be crouching behind some of it. As day dawned, Sam turned his steps towards the village, to send a message to Mr. Hahn. Much fatigued and with a heavy heart, he returned to the house, where Mrs. Pierce, who had been watching for him, met him at the door anxiously.

- "Have you seen anything of him?" she asked nervously.
 - "No," said Sam.
 - "What direction did you take?"
- "Right through the woods at the back of the house. Then I beat the brush on both sides of the path."
- "Don't you think, Sam, that it is more likely he would go down the mountain towards the village?"
- "No, ma'am, I don't. A fellow in his condition is likely to do the thing that isn't likely; that's why I went up the mountain."
 - "What are you going to do now?"

First thing I'm going to do is to get some break-

fast, and I want some strong black coffee to brace me up a bit. Then I'm going back to the village and see what help I can get. We'll search every piece of woods within ten miles of the house before night."

"Hadn't you better lie down, Sam, and take a little rest before you start out again?"

"Rest, Mrs. Pierce? Do you think I could rest, with Mr. Hahn a-coming up to-night? I'd rest more a-walking than I could lying around here thinking of Ed all the time."

When Sam sat down to breakfast he found himself more tired than he supposed. Not willing to give up, however, he started for the village. He had always been a favorite and now as he met one man after another, he seemed to know them all, and as few of them were engaged in labor at this time of the year, he pressed them all into his service.

- "Shall we take our guns, Sam?" one man asked.
- "Guns? No. What do you want with guns? You are not looking for wild animals, are you?"
- "Well, no; I suppose not. But sometimes these crazy fellows put up a pretty hard fight."
- "Well," Sam replied, "there ain't no danger of him seeing you, not while you are alone."
- "I don't know about that. Do you think I'm afraid?"
 - "No," was Sam's answer, "not while you are

down here in the village with twenty or thirty men around you."

"Well, if you don't want me, I can stay right here."

"Come on, Gus; we ought to be off, and I want every man I can get, and then maybe I won't have enough."

Off they go, about thirty in all. Arriving at the foot of the mountains, Sam called a halt.

"Now," said he, "here is where we ought to separate. We can spread out along the mountain and go straight up, keeping in sight of the man on either side of us. Then we will be sure not to pass him. When we get to the top, we will have to make two divisions and spread farther out to the right and left. Gus, there, can lead one division and I will take the other.

"If any one sees him, call out to the next man, and so pass the word along until we all know. When the word reaches the end men, they want to get right up the mountain as fast as they can, the next man to go a little slower, all closing in towards the centre so we can surround him. And one thing more, men, before we start. Ed may put up a fight; but whatever you do, don't hurt him. There are plenty of us here to overpower him without doing that. Now off with you, and when the last man

gets stationed, give the word, and we will go up together."

Mountain climbing under the most favorable circumstances is no easy task, but when you are endeavoring to keep a straight line and at the same time a watch on both sides of you, you will find your difficulties multiplied a hundredfold.

A sound is heard at some distance. Nearer and nearer it comes. Faintly you can distinguish it. "All ready, all ready, all ready," is passed from one man to another.

"Up you go then," said Sam. And the whole body of men started their climb.

The task they had set themselves was at first comparatively easy. The ascent being gradual and there being a number of clearings, aided them materially. When finally they reached the steeper portion, Sam called a halt.

"It is just as well," said he to his nearest neighbor, "that we catch our breath a little before tackling the rest of this."

"All right, Sam. Guess we'll all be pretty well out of breath by the time we reach the Mountain House."

"Haven't seen anything that looked like tracks, have you?"

" Nope."

"Well, I guess we might as well start again," said Sam.

For an hour or more all went well. Nothing could be heard except an occasional stone rolling down the mountain-side, which had been dislodged by the foot of one of the searchers.

The way was becoming more difficult, for some almost impossible; but on they struggled. One man was seen climbing a precipice, its walls seeming perpendicular. Yet up he went, gradually, carefully, hanging on by his finger tips. Up, up he mounted, nearing the top. But look. He pauses; he is clinging to the rock with one hand; his feet are barely touching the ledge beneath him. With his other hand he is frantically clutching at the solid wall in front of him.

Will he find foothold? See; he is slipping——May the Lord have mercy upon him!

Without a sound the man sprang into the air; then down he shot, down, down he went, and the men knew that seventy feet below the bare rocks lay in wait to crush and mangle his body.

They hurriedly left their places and ran to his assistance, if indeed assistance would be of any use. Arriving at the bottom of the precipice they could see no trace of their fallen companion.

"What do you suppose has become of him?" said one. "Did you see him fall?"

- "Yes," said the other, "he is surely killed."
- "I don't see anything that looks like a dead man around here," said a third, and then he almost pitched over a ledge in consternation, for overhead came a voice that called:
- "Say, what are you fellows talking about down there?"

They looked up, and there, instead of the dead man they were in search of, sat a man perched upon a limb, seeming to enjoy himself very much at their expense.

- "How in thunder did you get there?" called one of the group below.
 - "Just dropped here; that's all."
 - "Ain't you hurt?"

.

- "No; saw I couldn't hold on up there, so I jumped for this tree, and here I am."
- "Well, you're a lucky one. Come on; the rest of the fellows are way ahead of us."

Word had been passed along that three of the men were missing, and the whole line had come to a halt. When once more they were in their places, the advance was resumed.

Tired and bruised, they at last reached the top, where they rested for half an hour; then the descent was commenced. All day long they searched, and night found them as empty-handed as when they set out in the morning.

Convinced of one thing they certainly were, and that was that Sam's idea that Ed would go straight up the mountain was all wrong.

Sam found Mr. Hahn at the house when he returned, and he recounted to him every detail of what had happened on the night Ed escaped, as well as of the search that had followed.

"You have made one mistake, all of you," said Mr. Hahn, "in not informing me as to this man you have seen. It seems he had a deeper motive than you supposed. His object, no doubt, was to kidnap Edward, and that he has been successful, you can see for yourselves."

"That never occurred to me," said Sam. "But if that was what he was after, how comes it that he did not go with him?"

"Sam, as much as you have been around, you do not seem to be very quick at fathoming the ways of the wicked. This man was not alone; he has simply been the lookout for a gang of bad men. Their object is, no doubt, to secure a ransom for my boy."

"It all looks mighty likely, sir, when you put it that way," said Sam, shaking his head dubiously.

"Now, Sam, I want you to send this message to Mr. Spy. He is a man who has suited his profession to his name, and until he arrives to-morrow, we will not do anything in this matter. It is harder to

undo a mistake, you know, than it is to travel on the straight road."

It was well for Sam's health that Mr. Hahn counseled delay, as he had been two days and a night in constant motion and now nature was coming to his rescue and would put him to sleep, whether he would or not.

All in the house slumbered save Mr. Hahn, who paced the floor of his room like some wild animal, back and forth, muttering to himself.

Who could be at the bottom of this? What enemy would attack him through his child?

In that one night Tom Hahn lived his whole life over. Every successful deal he ever made came up before him now; and he wondered who had been injured; for he knew full well that much of his gain had come through the loss of some one less fortunate.

These thoughts now nearly drove him mad. What had riches done for him? First deprived his son of his intelligence; then it had been the means of having his son stolen from him. "Blessed is he who hath but the comforts of life; for of him no one is envious," he cried aloud in his despair.

Morning dawned, to find Tom Hahn still upon his feet, his bed undisturbed. He ate an early breakfast and went to the library to await the arrival of Mr. Spy. As for Sam, he had not been heard from, and when Mrs. Pierce finally rapped on his door to tell him that Mr. Spy had arrived and that Mr. Hahn wanted him, Sam left his bed feeling somewhat sorry Mr. Spy had not missed his train.

After washing his face in the cold spring water which supplied the house through pipes set deep in the ground, Sam felt like another man; and that other man was as hungry as a bear. So he partook of a hearty breakfast and then presented himself before the two who were waiting for him.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Hahn, "I want you to give to Mr. Spy every detail, just as you gave them to me."

Sam once more went over the account of his adventures with the man and of the escape of Ed.

- "Now," said Mr. Spy, "I want you to answer me a few questions. Was this man you saw in the house, the same as was seen skulking around?"
- "Mrs. Pierce says he's the same, sir. I never saw him before."
- "You say that he did not take anything?—that you did not miss anything?"
 - "No, sir, he didn't take anything, because---"
- "Never mind the if's and because's; just answer my questions. Did he make any fracks on the ground?"

" No, sir."

- "Have you no idea which direction he took after leaving the house?"
 - " No, sir."
- "You say, Sam, that you think Ed escaped by the kitchen door. Why is it not just as likely that he went down the ladder the same as the man did?"
- "The kitchen door was unlocked, sir, and Ed knew that way out of the house; but you couldn't make him understand about a ladder."
- "Was Ed ever violent while you had charge of him?"
- "Yes, sir; sometimes he was pretty hard to manage."
- "Did he ever show any inclination to get away from you?"
- "Yes, sir, once or twice he tried to run away when I had him out walking."
- "Did he seem to notice people when you would pass them on the road?"
- "Oh, yes; he would shy away from them like a horse does from a piece of paper. He seemed to be afraid every one was going to hurt him."
- "Has any one ever spoken to him when you had him out?"
- "No, sir, they would look at him, knowing who he was, but no one ever tried to talk to him."
 - "That will do, Sam."

.

Mr. Spy waited until Sam had left the room. Then turning to Mr. Hahn, he said:

"It seems to me, sir, that Sam was right and you were wrong in this matter. I can see nothing to lead me to believe that your son was kidnapped. This man evidently wanted to rob the house and Ed simply took advantage of Sam's absence to make good his escape."

"Well, Mr. Spy, suppose you are right; what are we going to do?"

"The only thing we can do is to follow Sam's course of searching the woods. He will be getting pretty hungry soon and will show up somewhere."

"Don't you think, Mr. Spy, that we had better send word to all the villages around here to keep on the lookout for him?"

"Yes, and it would be as well to offer a reward for his capture, providing he is not harmed."

"I will do that," said Mr. Hahn. "I will offer one thousand dollars for his safe return here."

"That will set a good many idle hands to work, Mr. Hahn; and it seems to me that you should get speedy returns."

"Do you think I should telephone around, Mr. Spy, or would you go in person?"

"You might telephone, to save time, but I think you should go around yourself, to show that the offer of the reward is authentic. While you are

doing that, I will look the ground over and see what I can find out about this man who began the trouble."

Mr. Hahn went to the 'phone, and kept the messages flying over the wire until he had reached every village he could think of within a radius of fifteen miles from Palenville. This done, he started out to find Mr. Spy, as he wanted him to accompany him in his round of the settlements.

CHAPTER VI.

ACROSS THE CLOVE.

His son Edward had been awakened by Mrs. Pierce's screams, but had lain perfectly still, watching Sam until he saw him dash out of the room. Then the idea occurred to him that he would get dressed and follow.

Hurriedly he put on his clothes and cautiously he went down the back stairway, got his hat and coat and left the house by the kitchen door, closing it softly behind him.

Out at night and alone, with no one to interfere with him, was something he was not accustomed to and it did not take him long to realize the difference between liberty and captivity.

He was free and was about to shout in exultation, when he saw Sam's shadow on the curtain of the second story window. Ed grinned at his own cunning and started down the road towards the village. He had not gone far, however, when he realized that he knew the road perfectly, which fact

did not suit him at all, so, turning off to the right, he walked some distance along the side of the mountain and by the time the sun had risen he had crossed the Clove and was ascending the mountain on the other side.

He paused at the brink of a little stream, and, bending over, soon had his face buried in the sparkling water. It seemed but a second that his head had been bent thus; yet in that second another man had approached the stream.

"Hey, there," said he; "if you are not going to take a bath, I'd like to get a pail of water."

Ed started to his feet, wiped the water from his face with a handkerchief and stood looking at the man without speaking.

Seeming not to notice his silence, the man filled his pail and started off, but after taking a few steps, he changed his mind and turned once more to Ed. Giving a jerk of the head, he said:

"We are going to have breakfast over here. Will you join us, stranger?"

Ed understood what that meant, and he turned to follow mutely.

"Say, stranger," the man continued, "is there anything to shoot up here?"

Ed stopped short and turned about to run, and the man with the pail eyed him a moment sharply.

"You fool," he remarked. "Do you think we

want to shoot you? What's the matter with you, anyway; can't you talk?"

- "Oh, yes," Ed replied instantly, "when I can find any one to talk to."
 - "Don't you call me anybody?"
- "No," was Ed's answer; "you are only half-witted and no companion for me."

The man looked sharply at him. "I guess that's what is the matter with the fellow himself," he muttered, and turning more kindly to Ed, said:

"Come on, my lad. We will not quarrel over that. Some breakfast will do us both good."

A few moments brought them to a camp-fire, round which sat three men, who looked up as they heard footsteps approaching.

"Hello, Bob," said one, "who have you there?"

Bob winked his eye at his companions. "A fellow I found down at the stream. He says I'm only half-witted. Brought him along to have some breakfast with us."

Ed was rather shy of his new companions. He held off at a distance until he saw them take some meat from a pot which swung over the fire, the savory odor of which reached his nostrils. This temptation was not to be withstood; so drawing near he took a seat on the ground beside them.

[&]quot;Say, young 'un; what's your name?"

[&]quot; Ed."

- "Ed what?"
- " Ed."
- "Look here, youngster; don't you come any of that over us. What's your name?"
 - " Ed."
- "Leave him alone, Dick; don't you see how the land lays?" urged Bob, and he tapped his own forehead significantly.

The meal was finished without any further reference to Ed; and the usual occupation of the morning commenced—lying round spinning yarns. The afternoon was spent in much the same way as the morning had been; but as night came on the camp assumed more activity.

- "Where will we strike out to-night, Bob?"
- "Don't make any difference to me, Dick. If any of you fellows know of something good, let's have it."
- "Seems we are all dry, so far as information on that score goes."
- "Aye, Charlie," another member of the party, put in; "so far as everything else goes, too, except spring water."
- "Well," Dick responded, "suppose we lay in a stock of wet goods to-night."
 - "Who shall we hit?" quizzed Bob.
 - "Oh," Dick remarked carelessly, "there is a

saloon down near the village that carries a pretty good stock and I think they can spare us some of it."

The thing was settled and off they went. The night being very dark, Bob and Dick stuck to the road more than was their custom.

- "What do you think of the kid I brought in today?" asked Bob.
- "Guess we can make use of him, after we get him broke in."
- "We've got to keep our eye on him or we'll never break him in. He'll give us the slip—he's afraid of his own shadow."
- "Sh, Bob; here comes some one." And the two men darted into the bushes at the side of the road and waited.
 - "Do you think it's any use to hold him up, Bob?"
- "No; we'll only queer our other game if we do; and the boys would rather have some rum than they would a fistful of money."

So the man was allowed to pass by, little knowing in what close danger he was.

Two o'clock found the highwaymen at the door of the Casino.

- "Have you your tools?" Dick asked of Bob.
- "Sure," was the answer. "I always carry my night key."

As he spoke he pulled out of his pocket a sectional

brace and bit and quickly adjusting the parts commenced to bore holes around the lock.

It was evident that he was no novice, for in less than five minutes he had opened the door and invited Dick to enter. In they went and quietly and speedily they gathered together the choicest brands of liquor, adding some of the best cigars they could find.

- "Well," said Bob, "I guess this is about all we want here."
 - "Have you looked in the till?" Dick whispered.
 - " No; guess there ain't much use."
- "Won't do any harm." And Dick pulled out the cash drawer.

He looked at the contents and then at Bob.

- "Well, I'm willing to take this for my share," he leered.
 - "What's there?"

For answer Dick displayed a handful of bills.

- "Guess this must be the old man's safe," he chuckled.
- "We've got all we want, so let's clear out of here," said Bob. "The longer our start the less likely they are to track us."

Dick paused a moment and taking a blank card from his pocket wrote on it, "Many thanks." Laying this on the bar he followed Bob. "Might just as well be decent about it," he remarked with a grin, and back they tramped to their camp.

When Mr. Spy reached the village there was but one topic of conversation afloat and that was "the burglarizing of the Casino."

"This looks like rapid work," the detective thought. "Mr. Hahn's house one night, the Casino next," but as he was a man of few words, he mingled with the different groups and asked questions but never offered a suggestion. He strictly avoided answering any of the many queries made him.

Gus, who had been out with Sam's searching party, was on hand this morning, and he eyed Mr. Spy with considerable suspicion. Finally he commenced to ask his neighbors if they knew who this strange man was.

One after another acknowledged that they had never seen him before.

"Well," Gus said contemptuously, "you're a beautiful lot of chuckleheads! Here is this fellow, the only stranger in town so far as I know, and two robberies, one right on top of the other, happen. Yet you tell him all you know, and what information has he given you in return?"

"Do you think he did it, Gus?" they queried suspiciously.

"How do I know? If I knew all about the af-

fair there wouldn't be any mystery to it, would there?"

"Say—I'm going to find out who that fellow is," spoke up another.

"You mean, you are going to try," corrected Gus. "But that don't say that you're going to learn anything, dinkey."

Then Ephraim Rathman, the town constable, stepped up to Mr. Spy.

- "Say, stranger," he accosted him, "who might you be, anyway?"
- "My name is Mr. Spy, sir; I am from New York."
 - "What's your business up here?" he quizzed.
- "Now, my good sir, I have given my name and address. You have not done me the same honor."
- "My name is Rathman, Ephraim Rathman! I am constable of this here village and when a stranger comes round and the whole town's been carried away by burglars, I want to know something about him, ain't that right?"
- "That is very natural, Mr. Ephraim Rathman, and if I can lend you any assistance, I should only be too pleased."
- "Well, sir, who be you, then?" he insisted shortly.
- "I have just told you who I am. Is that not enough?"

Ė

By this time the two men were surrounded by the villagers, every one of whom was eager to hear what was being said. An occasional suggestion was offered by the crowd, such as, "Lock him up on suspicion, Eph! You've got the law with you."

It is hard to say how long constable Rathman would have withstood the temptation, had not the conversation been interrupted by a man elbowing his way through the crowd.

"What is the matter here, Mr. Spy?" he inquired sharply.

"These rustics seem to think that a man should carry his pedigree in his pocket when he visits their country," said Mr. Spy, with a broad smile. "Will you vouch for me to them, Mr. Hahn?"

"Certainly, sir."

Then turning to the crowd, he said: "Gentlemen, you need have no fear of Mr. Spy. He is——"

Mr. Spy raised his hand. "Never mind who or what I am, Mr. Hahn. I do not believe in satisfying the curiosity of every man I meet. You vouch for me, and that should be sufficient for these gentlemen."

Then taking Mr. Hahn's arm, he started down the road.

"Why did you not want me to tell them who you are, Mr. Spy?"

"Simply because I prefer to work in the dark.

You don't know but that the very men we are looking for might be in that crowd, or whether or not they have an accomplice there."

"Every man to his business," Mr. Hahn returned. "I suppose I would bungle this thing up in less than twenty-four hours."

"It's a good plan, Mr. Hahn, not to talk too much. One of the first lessons I learned in this business was 'that I had two eyes, two ears and two nostrils, but only one mouth,' and I make it a rule to keep that mouth shut six-sevenths of the time."

"Very good, Mr. Spy, very good, indeed. But where are we going now?"

"Over to take a look at the Casino. I want to see if the burglars left any tracks there."

"Do you think the same man is responsible for both these affairs?"

"Can't say, sir. But judging from what I heard in the village there must have been more than one man in this last job."

Mr. Spy had no difficulty in investigating the robbery at the Casino. Being with Mr. Hahn, it was simply attributed to curiosity. When the detective left he had come to the firm conclusion that the men who had been there had nothing whatever to do either with Mr. Hahn's house or with Mr. Hahn's son.

"I don't see, Mr. Spy, how you can be so positive," Mr. Hahn observed.

"Well, sir; every man has his own peculiar way of doing a thing. Now in these two cases there are no two circumstances alike. The man who entered your house preferred to enter by the second story and work towards the downstairs, while in this case, the men broke in on the first floor, and we have nothing to show that they considered the second floor of any value at all."

Mr. Hahn looked at him in open admiration.

"Guess I had better leave you alone in this matter, Spy. I see that you think further than I do. But now I want you to go the rounds of the village with me, as we may get some information regarding the place from which these men came."

The remainder of the day and, in fact, the next several days, were spent in traveling from town to town, and in front of the post-office of each town Mr. Hahn had the following notice posted:

\$1,000 REWARD.

FOR THE SAFE RETURN OF EDWARD HAHN,

SON OF TOM HAHN OF PALENVILLE.

NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

These notices caused considerable commotion in every village where they appeared. Each settle-

ment turned out a score or more of amateur detectives, all confident that they would get the reward.

Did they not know every foot of these mountains? Had they not romped over them as lads, hunted through them as they grew older, and why, therefore, should they not be able to find this Edward Hahn if he were up there?

Meanwhile, while this excitement was going on in the villages, the four comrades broke camp and started over the mountains towards Tannersville.

Being of a curious turn of mind, however, they decided that one of their number should visit Palenville and see what was said of the Casino affair. At the same time he was to purchase sugar, coffee and several other necessary articles which did not seem worth their while to steal in bulk.

The three others taking Ed with them, were to move slowly, while the fourth was to use all possible speed and overtake them. A man called Charley had been selected as the one to go to the village. Making a list of the things required, he dressed himself as a hunter and started off so as to reach the village at about the same time that the inbound train arrived. He hid in the bushes on the opposite side of the track from the station, and as the people were leaving the train, he jumped aboard the rear platform and walking through the car, gave the im-

pression that he too had been one of the passengers just from Catskill Landing.

Stepping up to one of the men who were standing around he said:

"Say, mister, can you tell me where a fellow can lay in some supplies? I am going up the mountains to do a little shooting and want some things to take along."

"Guess you can get what you want up in the village," said the man laconically.

"And which way does the village lay from here?" asked Charley, courteously.

"Go right down there until you come to a cross road; then turn to the right."

Charley thanked him and started off, but he had only taken a few steps when he was hailed by the man he had addressed.

"Say, stranger; I'm going up that way in a minute. If you don't mind waiting, I'll show you the road."

This was just what Charley wanted. So resting his gun on the ground, he passed the intervening time watching the people.

"Anything doing around here this time of the year?" he inquired as the man joined him and they were walking down the road.

"Anything doin'? Well, I guess you'd a thought so if you'd been here the last two or three nights.

Them burglar fellows have been raising thunder around here."

- "You don't tell me."
- "Yes, I do tell you, too! They got the whole town pretty nigh scared out of their boots."
 - "Did they get much of a haul?"
- "About all they could carry, I reckon. That is, over there at the Casino. They didn't get nothing up at Mr. Hahn's house."
 - "How was that? Were they scared away?"
- "Guess they were. But then, young Ed escaped that night, and Mr. Hahn would rather have lost the whole house than have had him get away, I reckon."
 - "Young Ed? Who is he?"
- "He's Mr. Hahn's son—weak-minded, they say. His father's offered \$1,000 reward for his safe return."
- "Say, is that on the level, mister? \$1,000 to the fellow who brings him back?"

The man looked at Charley a minute before answering.

"Seems to me you're mighty interested in this, all at once, for a fellow who didn't know anything about it."

Charley's agitation over the thousand dollars' reward had nearly been the means of his undoing. Quickly recovering himself, he said:

- "Why shouldn't I be? Ain't I going up the mountains and don't I have as good a show to find him as any other fellow?"
- "Well, I reckon you have, if you start in the right direction."
- "What kind of a looking fellow is he?" Charley asked.
- "You'll see a full description of him up here at the post-office."

As they jogged along, Charley pumped the man dry of all the information he had concerning Ed Hahn, and when they reached the post-office thanked him for showing him the road and then bade him good-night.

Then taking a pencil and paper from his pocket he copied down the full notice.

"Well," said he, "this beats the Casino all hollow."

He wasted no time in getting the things for which he had come, but wandered on up the mountain road. As soon as he was out of sight of the village he took to the woods. Half an hour later a shrill whistle sounded up the side of the mountain, and a moment later it was answered by some one still higher up. At short intervals these signals were repeated.

In this way, guided by the sound, Charley finally reached his companions.

"Say, if any of you fellows want a big haul," said he, "just let me go alone."

As he spoke he pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, lighted a torch and bade the men gather round to listen.

- "There," said Charley, as he finished reading the notice, "can any of you beat that for a night's haul?"
- "But you didn't make that haul; it was me," Bob interrupted.
- "Go on! Didn't I bring in the information of the reward?"
- "Well, what's that? Didn't I bring in the chap? I get the credit for this deal."

The wild life which these men were leading tended to make them irritable and quick to anger. Where their present argument would have ended we cannot say, had not another voice been heard.

"You fellows are fighting, and neither of you know what about. If this Ed Hahn is the fellow I think he is, he stays right here; and if any of you lets him slip through your fingers you will have to answer to me for it."

This ended the discussion, for the speaker was no other than their leader.

"Now, boys, see here," he said. "I have an old score to settle with the father of this lad, before we get through with him a thousand dollars won't amount to anything." The men sullenly gave in, as their leader was a man superior to them in every way and moreover had joined them under singular conditions.

Jim Lambert had been a prosperous business man in New York, and like most men who succeed in accumulating a little money, he became restless and thought he could get rich quicker in Wall Street. His first ventures were successful, and he thought he could see millions rolling into his pocket.

Selling his business that he might have more capital with which to work, he took his usual place in his broker's office on the memorable morning of September the thirteenth.

So rapid had been the decline in stocks that Mr. Lambert had had no opportunity to get in until C. P. had been driven down to 75. At that point he commenced to sell short and as the receding quotations were posted on the blackboard, lost his head, and like most of the uninitiated, he placed his last dollar on C. P., to win or lose.

Many times as he sat there watching this downward flight he congratulated himself on what he would make that day.

"What a fool I have been," he thought, "to stick to legitimate business all these years. Instead of being worth thousands, I could have been worth millions by this time."

When would this stock reach bottom? There seemed no indication of it yet; the bears were as strong as ever.

Instead of buying then and taking an enormous profit, he held on greedily, waiting for the last point. Then came the turn in the tide and he was on his feet in a instant.

"What's that—C. P. 100?" cried Lambert. "My God; there must be some mistake!"

Yes, there was a mistake. He had made it himself by staying in too long. A ruined man, James Lambert left the exchange that day and went out into the world to make a fresh start.

That start, unfortunately for him, was made in a saloon. It was there that he had met Bob and Dick, and, in his frame of mind, it did not take them long to persuade him "to get money easy," as Bob expressed it.

"You've been robbed by these big fellows, and you would be a fool if you didn't get it back the same way," was Dick's counsel.

So their plans were laid and their operations carried on near home until the police, becoming suspicious, commenced to watch them.

From time to time it became necessary for them to change quarters. In the meantime Lambert had not neglected to find out who had been the cause of his downfall and when the situation had been explained to him he took an oath, that some day he would be avenged on Tom Hahn.

Lambert's mind could not grasp the fact that he himself had been to blame, but cursed Mr. Hahn as though that gentleman had actually robbed him of all he possessed.

Being of superior intelligence, he became the acknowledged leader of the highwaymen, and in all their plans Dick and Bob would listen to him and obey.

Charley had been added to the trio, as a fourth man had become necessary to pull off some big job. The four men then formed a compact, by which they were all to stick together and divide their spoils equally, no matter who had done the work.

After avoiding the police of New York as long as they considered it safe, they traveled north, leaving a trail of crime wherever they went.

At last the long sought opportunity for revenge was placed in Lambert's hands and without the slightest effort on his part. But it really seemed too good to be true. He must investigate the matter thoroughly for himself. Designating a place where he could rejoin his followers, he started off on his lonesome trail.

He found it an easy matter to connect Mr. Hahn of Wall Street, with this Ed Hahn who was held as a lunatic, in the mountains. He learned it was

his only son—and now he held that son in his grasp! Calling his men around him, he said:—" Men—we have not a bartender or a night watchman to contend with in this matter, but a mighty smart man, whose money will bring to his assistance the best detectives in New York. As yet he thinks his boy is roaming in these woods alone. We will have to inform him that he is wrong."

"Well," commented Bob, "if you are going to tell him where he is, what's the matter with him sending men up here to take him away from us?"

"You fool! Did any one say I was going to tell him where his son is? Now, see here; I tell you what my plan is. Dick there is to take a train at Tannersville for Catskill village. He's to take a letter down with him and post it there; then come back on the next train. That will send them in the wrong direction, if they try to trap us."

"Yes," said Bob, "but what's going to be in that letter?"

"Well, I'll write it now, then you can see," said Lambert.

Pencil and paper were produced, and Jim Lambert wrote:

"Mr. Tom Hahn.

Dear Sir:

A man of your means should be ashamed to set one thousand dollars as the prize at which

you value your son. We assure you, sir, that our esteem for him is greater than yours. We therefore are compelled to respectfully decline your meagre offer.

We are willing, however, to accept two hundred times the amount named by you; and in return, sir, we will agree to restore to you your son. We will not charge anything additional for his board.

Alive or dead we will send your son to you: will you kindly tell us which you prefer?

Answer in the Zephyr.

Your	most	humble						servant,												
																		,	,,	
				٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠	٠		

Dick took the letter to Catskill village, as agreed. Then he returned to camp, where he and his companions waited patiently for the "Zephyr" and Mr. Hahn's answer.

92

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROPOSAL.

LILLIAN burst in upon Nina in the schoolroom, crying, "Oh, Miss Nina, I'm a rich woman."

- "Are you, dear? Tell me about it," Nina insisted quietly.
- "I don't exactly know all about it—Mr. Hahn says I'll have to wait until I grow up to know—but I know a little mite."
- "And you won't want your poor Nina any more then, will you?"
- "Oh yes, Miss Nina! I'll want you more than ever, for you'll have to tell me how to spend all the money I'm going to get."
- "It will be more important, dear, to tell you how to save it. But come, dear, I must get you ready for your supper now," and she spread out a fresh white dress for her to put on before going down to the table.

Lillian had been taught that it was not good manners for children to talk at the table where grown

folks were, and on this occasion she managed by a great effort to obey her instructions though she wished very much to ask about her money.

When supper was over, she went up to her room all eagerness to await Nina's return. Scarcely had that lady opened the door when Lillian pounced upon her and wanted to know if she could buy a beautiful house like this.

- "I am sure, Lillian, I cannot say; as I know nothing about this money except what you have told me. But you must not think of it any more. Do you want me to read to you for a little while before bedtime?"
- "You are not going to put my hair up in those curl things, are you, Miss Nina?"
- "Yes, dear; we want you to look nice to-morrow, you know."
- "How many are you going to put up to-night—two?"
- "No, dear; two would not do much good. We are going to put up six."
- "Oh, no, Miss Nina, only put up three—that will be enough, I'm sure."
 - "What, is my little girl going to be naughty?"
- "No, no, Miss Nina, I'm not going to be naughty. Everybody is good to me—I want to be good my-self—put as many as you like of them."

One lock of hair was tied up, then two, and so on

until all six had been tightly twisted into the curlers. Lillian rose to her feet and contemplated herself for a moment in the looking-glass.

"Miss Nina," she said, giggling softly, "I look just like a little white Topsy, don't I?"

"Yes, dear."

"Are you going to read to me about her, Miss Nina?"

"I thought you wanted me to read about Eva and Uncle Tom?"

"Oh yes, I do!" the child cried and then sprung into bed between the sheets, resting her head upon the snowy, white pillows, and wriggling herself into an attitude of listening. Nina picked up the book and began to read, but her task was not a long one, for Lillian was soon enjoying that peaceful sleep which only childhood's innocence can give.

As for Nina, it was a different matter. Was this not the night that Will was going to take her to the theatre? Will, dear Will, the very thought of his name sent a thrill to her heart. She mused, "Why did I ever learn to love him! Only to have my heart broken some day, I suppose." And a deep sigh escaped her lips. "I will not let him see my sorrow at any rate." She whispered to herself as she glanced towards the clock. "Why, he is late. I wonder if anything has happened to him?"

Nina had put on her prettiest gown, brushed her

hair in the most becoming fashion and at last succeeded in adjusting her daintiest hat. Turning to take a last look at herself in the glass she wondered what Will would think of her this night.

Her eyes sparkled and her cheeks turned crimson as she thought of him.

"What a goose I am!" she laughed, blushing from thinking of him! "What will I do when I meet him? I hope there will be no one about."

Her wish was granted; for the next moment a maid called and told her that Mr. Harris was downstairs. As he heard the rustle of her skirts touching the stairs he turned and watched her coming toward him. "What a love of a girl she is," he murmured.

Had he followed his first impulse he would have rushed out in the hall and flung his arms about Nina and then and there declared his love for her; but he deemed it wise to be more discreet in his wooing, so he seized her hand, pressed it gently to his lips and looked straight into her eyes.

"Nina, you are simply a dream to-night;" he exclaimed, "I tell you I shall be the proudest man in town having you by my side."

"Don't be foolish, Will! You know I was always taught to beware of flatterers," she said, immensely pleased.

"So you think I meant to flatter you, do you? Now I'm sure I should never attempt that; for that

little tongue of yours is too sharp for me, and I would only get the worst of it."

"Am I a scold who finds fault with you," she pouted prettily, and extended her hand to Will, who siezed it eagerly.

"Nina, you are a little witch, and one of these days I will take you under my arm and run away with you."

"I'm afraid you would get more than you bargain for, I weigh one hundred and ten pounds, and I don't think you would want to carry me very far," she said in a bantering spirit.

"I'd carry you just so far that you would never get back here again. Then I would have you all to myself."

It is doubtful if there were any at the theatre that night more radiantly happy than Nina and Will, and after the play, when Will was bidding her good-night, Nina expressed her great pleasure in having accompanied him.

"The pleasure," exclaimed Will, "was all mine in having you with me. But if you think you owe me a debt of gratitude I know how you can pay it."

"How?" shyly asked Nina.

"By giving me a good-night kiss;" he urged.

"That is the way you do things, is it? Put me under obligation to you, then set your own price

and demand payment the moment the bill is presented?"

"No, no, Nina! I did not mean it like that. You are under no obligation to me, and if you do not feel that you can kiss me freely and willingly, I do not want it."

All this time Will was holding Nina's hand in his and looking down in her face in a pleading way. She was wavering; it would have been hard to tell what was passing through her mind. Suddenly her manner changed—a frightened look came over her face.

"No, no, Will; do not ask me. Say good-night and go. I do not wish to hurt your feelings; but I cannot—must not—do what you ask."

Her heart was beating wildly and the color had left her cheeks as she watched Will depart from the house and pass down the front stoop. Closing the door, she went directly to her room and without removing her wraps, she flung herself on the bed and wept bitterly.

"I love him," she sobbed, "and what is the use of my trying to fight it out with my heart. He is all I have. Without him I should be miserable."

Having come to the solution of her trouble, Nina undressed and crept into bed and was soon fast asleep. Her face had lost its frightened expression and in its place rested a tender smile.

All know, who have ever been interested enough to note the actions of true lovers, how impossible it is to keep them apart, so when I say that a few evenings later Nina and Will were seen to enter Central Park and stroll along the shady path, together, you will agree with me in saying, "I told you so!"

- "And look," said Nina pensively, "there are two lovers, let's follow and watch them."
- "All right," agreed Will with alacrity, "and let's imitate them," he added craftily, so his arm stole around her waist, and he drew her closer to him.
- "Nina," said he, "don't you think you could give me just one—little formal kiss?"
- "I'm afraid I could not form that kind of a kiss," said Nina demurely as she turned her face towards his and looked straight into his eyes.

Will stopped short and put his arm about her waist, clasping her closer to his breast.

- "Nina," said he, authoritatively, "is that true? Did you really mean that? Do you truly care for me? I have loved you with all my heart ever since the first day I saw you, but I dared not tell you so."
- "Will, I have no one else in the world save you: you possess all my love. You are everything to me, Will. Ever since I first saw you, I could think of no one, but you."

Will no longer asked her permission, but bending

his head, imprinted upon her pretty lips his first kiss.

- "Nina—my own Nina!" he whispered. "How I have longed for this moment."
- "Are you sure, dear Will, that some day you will not regret to-night?"
- "Regret, my darling! My whole life's happiness rests with you."
- "Oh, Will, if I could only tell you how I love you; how I have longed for you, yet feared that our union could never be."
- "Your fears were uncalled for; for I have loved you always and determined to make you mine. But for some reason you would always shrink from me just when I had begun to think you cared for me."
- "Forgive me, Will dear, I would not have hurt your feelings for the world; but I was afraid it might only be a passing fancy on your part—and I loved you so that a future separation would have broken my heart. You are sure you will never tire of me?"
- "Have no fear of that, little one! You will be my wife, and I shall be proud of you."
- "Your wife? Can this happiness ever come to me? What will your father and mother say? You know, I am only a governess and you——"
 - "Don't you worry about that, Nina. I have one

of the best fathers that ever lived, and as for mother, if she sees me happy, that's all she'll ask."

"Do not tell them yet, dear. Let us enjoy our love a little while alone. I don't want to share even the thought of it with a living soul."

"You shall have it as you wish, darling. Though I feel so proud and happy I would like to go out on the Plaza, and just shout it out to every one."

"What time is it?" asked Nina suddenly. "I had forgotten all about going home."

Will took out his watch and striking a match looked at it closely.

"It is twelve o'clock," he said with a smile.

"Oh, what shall I do?" Nina lamented. "I told Mrs. Hahn I was going out but for a few minutes, and now what shall I tell her?"

"Never mind, dearest. Let me go to her and tell her just how things stand between you and me."

"Suppose she should not like it, dear, and should tell me I had to go?"

"Well, Nina, that would be all right. It would merely mean that we would get married the sooner. The only trouble is, I'm not of age, and I would rather not have father know about this until then. But it is sure to come out all right," Will ended, hopefully.

In the meantime, Mrs. Hahn, who had formed a great attachment for Nina, when she did not re-



Will was the first to speak



turn, as she said she would, became much worried, and turning to her husband, said:

"Tom, dear, do you think anything could have happened to Nina? She went out with Will Harris for a walk and said she would not be gone long."

"Will will take good care of her. He seems to be very fond of the girl," replied her husband from behind his newspaper.

"Yes, I suppose so; but I wish she were back. So many strange things happen nowadays that I grow nervous."

"Don't worry, Bessie. If they don't come pretty soon, I will go out and look for them," and he settled back to enjoy the news.

They waited until nearly twelve o'clock and then Mr. Hahn took his hat and coat and started out in search of her. Near the street corner the first persons he saw were Will and Nina coming rapidly towards him, so trusting that he had not been seen, Mr. Hahn returned to the house. A moment later Will and Nina, like two culprits, appeared before them. Will was the first to speak.

"You must not blame Nina for being so late, Mrs. Hahn. It was all my fault."

"I have no intention of blaming either her or you, Will; though the hour is a little late."

"Well, you see, Mrs. Hahn, we did not realize

what time it was; but as soon as I looked at my watch we hurried right home."

"You look very happy over it," observed Mr. Hahn, slyly.

Will's face colored as he looked at Nina. She dropped her head, her pretty face assuming a crimson hue.

"Well, Will will tell you all about it, sir," she faltered.

"Yes," said Will, looking up at Mr. Hahn. "The fact is that Nina and I love each other and some day we are going to get married."

Mrs. Hahn rose from her chair and going over to Nina asked softly, "Is this true, Nina?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hahn; we found it out to-night."

Mrs. Hahn took Nina in her arms and kissed her.

- "Will," she said, "you must be good to this little girl of ours; for we claim her as our own, you know."
- "You need have no fear of that, Mrs. Hahn. I love her too much not to be good to her."
- "And do you not seek to know anything about Nina, Will?" she next asked pleasantly.
- "No, Mrs. Hahn; I know her nature and am willing to take her for what she is herself," he answered proudly, looking towards his blushing fiancée.
 - "But you need not do that," returned Mrs. Hahn

promptly. "Bring up two stools and both of you sit here at my knees; take hold of each other's hands—I know you want to—and listen to me, children; for even Nina here is ignorant of what I am going to tell you.

"I am going back, dear," she continued, giving Nina a caress, "before the time when you were born. Down in dear old Georgia, when I was a little girl, there lived an old family on a plantation adjoining that of my father's. This family belonged to the aristocracy of the South. The name was Cosgrove.

"Like many another Southern gentleman, when the terrible war broke out between the North and the South, John Cosgrove threw his fortunes in with the cause of the Confederacy. He entered the army as colonel of a regiment gathered from among the best men of our neighborhood. His record, dear Nina, was glorious.

"The end of that struggle you know too well. The only thing that matters to us now is the effect it had on the future life of the one we must consider. At the close of the war John Cosgrove returned to his plantation. He had many acres but only two hands to work now, and those two hands had not been used to toil. His slaves in their first burst of joy over being free had wandered away, and he and his wife, Nina, were left alone.

"They consulted and determined to make the fight for life in new surroundings. That is how you, Nina, happened to be a New York girl.

"Your father settled down in New York and fought a manly fight; but everything seemed to go against him. The people appeared to him as cold as the northern climate and he often said, 'By the time all the people up North got to hell they would chill the atmosphere so that it would make it a very pleasant place for a Southern gentleman to live in.'

"Your father, Nina, lived only until you were about three years old, leaving your mother to look after you. Her struggle was, indeed, a hard one. She had an abundance of pride and no money. It was about this time that I recognized your mother on the street one day and feeling sure that it was she I asked her if she were not Nina Cosgrove. At first I think she was going to deny her identity; but seeing her hesitate, I told her who I was and then asked her to come to see me.

"She never came, and Mr. Hahn and I started out to find her. Our search was a difficult one, dear, and when we discovered your mother she was lying at death's door. We did everything in our power to assist her, but she never rallied, and within a few months, Nina, you had lost both father and mother.

"Some friends looked after you and sent you to a

boarding-school, where we were fortunate enough to find you when we needed a governess for our Lillian. In the meantime, Nina, Mr. Hahn went South."

"Never mind hauling me in, Bessie," Mr. Hahn interposed, "just keep to facts."

"That is what I am going to do, Tom, dear, and you shall have all the credit you deserve."

Mr. Hahn said no more, and Mrs. Hahn continued:

"Mr. Hahn went South to find out what had become of the Cosgrove plantation. You can imagine his surprise and pleasure when he discovered that your father had kept the taxes paid, even at the expense of many comforts for himself. Since that time, Mr. Hahn has taken charge of the estate for you, and now, dear, you have a handsome property in the South, as well as an income from it; for much of it is rented to farmers.

"Now there is but one thing to tell. Why did we not inform you of all this before?" She looked down in the girl's face smilingly.

"No, Mrs. Hahn, you need not tell me that," Nina assured her, "I know you did it for the best and I am satisfied."

"Yes, dear, we thought it best to let you grow up independent, that when you received your own you would better know the value of it. Then, too, we

did not want a lot of fortune hunters bothering our little girl. Now, Nina, you know all and hereafter you are as one of the family to us," and she kissed the girl affectionately.

"That is very kind of you, Mrs. Hahn, but I still wish to be Lillian's governess," Nina insisted quietly.

"We do not want to part with you, Nina. You can continue with Lillian this winter, if you like, but next year we will send her to the same school where you received your education. You still must live with us, remember.

"Now, Will, you go home, and if your father says anything about your being late tell him that I kept you."

"Good night, Mrs. Hahn," said Will, "you have always been good to Nina and I'll bless you for it as long as I live. Good night, Mr. Hahn."

"Good night, Will," responded Mr. Hahn, cheerfully.

Will turned to leave the room.

"Are you not going to say good night to me?" Nina asked, roguishly.

"Yes," smiled Mrs. Hahn, "he will say good night to you in the hall—so trot along with him, you little minx."

Nina obeyed and did not return for some minutes. "You see," said Mr. Hahn on her return, "it

took him longer to say 'good night' to you than it did to us."

The blood rushed to Nina's cheeks.

"Now, don't tease her, Tom," said Mrs. Hahn.

"Just because you cannot blush any more is no reason why you should cause Nina to. Go to bed, now, dear; it is long after your hour, and you had better rest in the morning."

"Thank you," Nina answered. And bending forward she kissed Mrs. Hahn good night. Then, turning to Mr. Hahn, she extended her hand and said, "I want to thank you, sir, for all you have done for me. You have been more than a friend, you have been a father to me."

"Well, Nina, if you feel that way about it, suppose hereafter you consider me as such? I'm sure that Mrs. Hahn and I have room in our hearts for another child."

"Indeed we have," Mrs. Hahn agreed readily. "And I am sure that no one could fill the place better than Nina."

Tears of joy were streaming down Nina's face as Mrs. Hahn took her in her arms and caressed her.

"What a joyous night this has been for me!" she said. "First, I find that Will loves me, then I find a mother and father! This is indeed the day of my life, and in my room I shall fall upon my knees

and thank God for all the blessings he has bestowed upon me."

- "Yes, Nina, that is right, and Tom and I will do the same for having had given to us the sweet love of you, child."
- "Good night, father and mother, and may God bless you for being so good to me."

Had Nina looked back she would have seen that she was not the only one in tears. Mrs. Hahn was in her husband's arms and he was wiping the tears from her eyes that could not be kept back.

- "To-night, Bessie, dear, we have been rewarded for every little care and attention we have bestowed upon the daughter of John Cosgrove," he said tenderly.
- "Yes, Tom, we have won her love and respect. And do you know, dear, she seems more than a neighbor's child to me."
- "Yes, Bessie, I guess both of our hearts were ready to receive her as though she was our own child."
 - "Our own child! If he were only with us!"
- "Cheer up, little woman; no news is good news, and I know that Mr. Spy is not idle," he said.

So they lingered on talking about their absent boy until sleep came to their eyes.

As for Will Harris, he did not go home directly; he wanted time to think, time to enjoy this new

love which so filled his heart and mind. Every word that had been spoken that night came up before him, and he repeated them over and over again, recalling Nina's confession of love.

At last he found himself in front of his own home. He hardly knew it. There in the library burned a bright light, yet it was not the custom of the family to keep late hours. What could it mean? opened the door with his latch-key and walked in.

"Is that you, Will?"

The voice came from the library and Will recognized it at once. It was evident his father had been waiting up for him.

"Yes, sir."

١

"Come in here a moment. I want to speak to

Will was in no hurry to comply; he wanted time to compose himself before appearing before his father.

"Where have you been?" asked Mr. Harris, abruptly.

"Over at the Hahns'," Will said as short.

"Anything going on there to keep you so late?"

"No, sir, nothing in particular. Only Mrs. Hahn was telling a story, and she said I should explain to you that she kept me."

"That is very well for to-night, my boy; but recently you have not been keeping good hours, and

I have watched you in the store. You do not seem to take the same interest in business that you used to. You seem to be dreaming most of the time."

"I hadn't noticed it, sir," Will replied somewhat abashed.

"No, I suppose not. You do not seem to notice anything. Now, tell me, is there anything wrong? Are you worried about anything?"

"No, sir, I have nothing to be worried about."

"Well, I hope you are telling me the truth, for you know that I am your father and would do more for you than any one else. Now, go to bed, and hereafter see to it that you keep earlier hours."

Will turned and went to his room. "I'm half sorry," he reflected, "that I did not tell father all about it. But then Nina did not want me to; so I guess it is all right."

The next morning Will presented himself at the store as usual; but if he had been dreaming before, he must be sound asleep now. His father told him to bring a certain book—Will brought him his hat. Later, Mr. Harris sent him to deliver a letter—Will wandered around for half an hour or so and returned to the office.

- "Was there any answer?" inquired Mr. Harris.
- "Any answer to what?"
- "To what! Why, to that letter I gave you an hour ago to deliver."

Will dived down into his pockets. There was the letter.

"Give that to me!" stormed Mr. Harris. "I will take it myself, as I see I can't depend on you. Where have you been all this time?"

Will hung his head, but made no reply.

Thoroughly provoked, Mr. Harris left his private office. Will remained until six o'clock, then went home to supper. He would have liked very much to run over to see Nina, but he felt he did not dare after his miserable conduct that morning.

His father was not inclined to say much to him. The fact was, he was thoroughly disgusted with his behavior. He only asked him what had been the matter with him that day.

"I was tired," Will replied.

"Well, you had better stay in to-night and get your rest, sir, if you want to remain in the store with me."

"That is what I am going to do," said Will, and then he looked hard at his father. He wanted to make his peace with him, but there was his word to Nina.

What would he do? He could not content himself in the house a whole evening. "Ah," he thought, "I know. I'll write to Nina; that will be the next best thing to seeing her. The library is empty, fortunately for me. Now for a start.

" Dear Nina-"

Will held the sheet up before him and looked at it.

- "That doesn't look right; that doesn't half express what I feel for her. Let me see-
 - "My own precious Nina---
- "There, that's better. She's my own, and she is precious, too."

So he ran on:-

"My own precious Nina:

Cannot get over to see you to-night, dearest. Father is on the rampage. Found him sitting up for me last night. Wish it had been you, for I know you would not have questioned me as closely as he did. To-day, at the store, I could not see anything but your sweet face, and when I tried to read, every word spelled N-I-N-A.

Do you know, Nina it just seems as though I could not sit here and write to you. I want to see you so badly.

To-morrow night, row or no row, I'm coming over to see you and get more of those kisses I had to wait so long for. You need not think that you can hold me off any more, for I'm going to kiss you as often as I like now; that is, if we have time enough.

Now, dearest Nina, good night.

With all my heart, I am your own loving,

WILL."

He sealed the letter and addressed it. "But how am I to get it out of the house without father knowing about it?" he questioned himself whimsically.

Downstairs he crept and found the cook putting on her street clothes.

- "Cook," said he, "do you want to do something for me?"
- "Do something for you, Master Will! Haven't I always been doing something for you ever since you were born?"
- "Yes, I know," Will answered, "but this is different. I want you to mail this letter for me."

The cook took the letter and turning it over read the address.

- "You've got a girl, have you, Master Will?" she smiled.
- "Well, if I have, you needn't tell every one in the house about it," he cautioned.
- "Never mind, Master Will, the old cook has kept many of your secrets before and she is not likely to tell on you this time," she said soothingly, as she picked up her shawl and hurried out of doors, "I'll mail it so she will get it first thing in the morning."

So Will went to bed content.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I CANNOT ASK HER TO BE MY WIFE."

Six months had passed—they were six months of love and happiness for Will and Nina—and now a great event was to take place. On the eleventh of April Will was to attain his majority—the legal recognition of manhood.

Many preparations were under way to make this a gala day, and Mr. Harris would often cast upon Will a smile of approval, congratulating himself upon the manner in which he had reared this lad until he now stood before him the pride of the house.

Mrs. Harris had issued cards for a reception for the evening, and a few of their most intimate friends were invited to supper. Every one seemed happy, with but one exception. That exception was Will! Yet all this was being done in his honor.

A grave trouble confronted him: to be the social centre of an evening's gathering without Nina he could not endure; yet he dreaded to tell his father all.

On the evening of the seventh, Mr. Harris entered his home in an unusually happy frame of mind, and after supper, invited Will into the library for a quiet talk. Will obeyed, though he had some misgivings as to what that talk would be. Mr. Harris drew a comfortable chair up before the gas-log and lighting a cigar turned towards his son.

"Well," said he, "you are fast rounding one of the most important buoys in this troubled sea of life, my son. You will soon arrive at the full state of manhood. The question now presents itself, 'What are you going to do with your life?' Your mother and I have done our full duty by you as far as we have been able. In the future much will depend on yourself.

"Have you ever considered any other business or profession, or do you wish to continue in the store with me?"

"If you are satisfied, father, I should prefer to remain in business with you."

"Well, I think that would be the best for you. I have made money and see no reason why you should not do well in the same line. At the same time I want to leave you free to choose your occupation in life for yourself. It is very hard for a man to do what is distasteful to him." Then he turned more squarely towards him. "And there is another matter of which I wish to speak. Your

mother and I were married when I was just about your age and I do not consider it wise for a young man to delay in these matters.

"There is Miss Warwick: a very charming young woman, and her social position is equal with your own. I was speaking to her father to-day and he agreed with me that a union between you two would be very acceptable."

"Yes, but, father, I do not care for Miss Warwick; she is not my style of a girl at all."

"You must not be too hasty, my son. I am better fitted to judge of Miss Warwick's good qualities than you are. Besides they are a very wealthy family. They will be here on your birthday and I think that would be a very good time for you to declare your intentions. You see, I am in a position to know that she will accept you. Then we can tender you both our congratulations. It will be a glorious evening, my son, and we shall be very proud of you." Mr. Harris waited for his son's dutiful acquiescence.

"No, father, I cannot do what you ask. I do not love this girl and cannot ask her to be my wife," fell from Will's lips on the father's ear, with astonishing clearness.

"What, you refuse to obey me—you tell me what you will or will not do!"

"Do not be angry, father, what you ask me to do

is impossible. I could never marry a girl I did not love."

"Love! What has that to do with it? She has money and position, I tell you. You can learn to love her after you are married."

"That might be if I were going to marry her; but I tell you, father, it can never be."

Mr. Harris sprang from his chair and paced the floor rapidly. His cigar had gone out, though he still held it clinched between his teeth. A disobedient son in his house! At last he turned towards Will as though he meant to flog him.

"See here, sir!" said he. "This is the first time you have ever questioned my authority and it will not be well for you, sir, if you persist in disobeying me."

Will remained silent. There seemed nothing else for him to do. To hold out further against his father was only to increase his wrath. At the same time Will was determined to be true to his word to Nina.

Mr. Harris stormed for a while. "You can make up your mind, sir, what you are going to do, but by to-morrow morning I want your answer."

Will accepted this as a termination of the interview, and left the room immediately. He was in deep trouble, and there was only one with whom he could consult—Nina. He must go to Nina at once

and see if her ready wit would not offer some solution to his perplexity.

When he arrived at the house he found Nina in the parlor with Mr. and Mrs. Hahn.

He concluded to tell all of them, so he recounted his stormy interview with his father.

"Will," said Mr. Hahn, "what are you going to do?"

Will rose to his feet and stepping over to where Nina sat, put his arms around her.

"I have given my word to this girl," he said, "and I mean to keep it! She loves me and from no action of mine will she ever have cause to regret that she acknowledged me as her choice."

"That was well spoken, Will," said Mr. Hahn, "and you can depend upon me to give you all the assistance in my power."

"I know you will, Mr. Hahn," said Will. "But what am I going to do? Give up Nina I will not. To have an estrangement with my father I deeply regret. You see the position in which I am placed."

"Will, dear," said Nina, "do you not think if you told your father you are engaged to me he would be willing to drop Miss Warwick?"

"No, Nina; my father is a very strange man. He has set his heart on my marrying this other girl, and I fairly detest her since she has come to make trouble between you and me."

- "Trouble between you and me, Will? She cannot do that, can she?" she said in affright.
- "No, my love, she cannot do that. The trouble will be with father."

Mr. Hahn had listened. He was confident that Will was staunch and true. He also knew the character of Mr. Harris and realized that that gentleman would not give up his pet scheme without a bitter struggle.

"Do you think, Will, it would be advisable for me to see your father? Perhaps I could change his mind on this subject."

Will hesitated a moment before answering. "No, Mr. Hahn," he said, "the temper which you would find my father in to-night would only make matters worse. He has set his mind on this girl and any opposition to his will would only intensify his determination that I must marry her."

"Will," said Mr. Hahn, "step over to the library. I want to have a smoke, and we can talk it over in quietness there."

Nina and Mrs. Hahn watched the two leave the room.

"What shall we do, mother?" Nina murmured brokenly.

"I am sure I do not know, dear. I have always known that Mr. Harris was a stubborn man, but

never did I think it would concern us," replied Mrs. Hahn with a sigh.

- "You don't think Will will let his father influence him, do you?" the girl pleaded with trembling lips.
- "Why, Nina! Is this all the faith you have in the man to whom you have given your love?"
- "No, mother, I trust him; but I wish I could help him."
- "So you can, my dear, by showing him how much you love him and what your confidence in him is."

Nina made no answer. Her life had been one of tranquillity and peace, until this door of trouble had been flung open to her, and little was she prepared to combat the difficulties which now presented themselves to her mind!

How unlike Will his father seemed to her! Why should he meddle in his son's affairs? A bitter pang shot through her heart.

- "I am sure I shall never like him," she said aloud.
- "Never like who, dear?" Mrs. Hahn asked.
- "I did not know I was thinking aloud, mother. It was Mr. Harris, I meant."
- "Do not let your mind become prejudiced, my dear. We do not know how this matter will end. Mr. Harris has never seen you, remember."

She said no more as her husband and Will were

leaving the library, and entered the parlor where they sat.

Nina ran to Will, and putting her arms around his neck kissed him passionately.

- "Have you come to some conclusion, dear?" she asked.
- "Yes, we have decided on a plan of action. But now let us forget all about this. What do you say to a game of cards, Mr. Hahn?"
- "Very good, Will. I think Nina and I can beat you and Mrs. Hahn," and the four were soon gathered around a table; the play commenced, and the remainder of the evening was devoted to this friendly play of rivalry.

On the following morning Mr. Harris asked his son what he had concluded to do.

- "Well, sir," said Will, "I don't see that you have left me an alternative. I will declare my love on the night of my birthday."
- "Now you are talking common sense, Will. I knew you would not make such a fool of yourself as to throw away the opportunity I offered you," replied his father grasping his hand cordially.
- "Have you asked the Hahns, father? You know they are great friends of mine, and I should like to have them here."
- "No," said Mr. Harris, "but if you want them your mother will send them a special invitation."

"I wish she would," Will urged dutifully.

Mr. Harris started for the store well pleased that he had so easily won the victory over his son. "It is all in the way you begin with them," he chuckled, "bend the twig and so the limb will grow, is a very true saying."

And now, everything ran smoothly. The eleventh of April had arrived, and Will received congratulations from all sides. At supper he was toasted and wined by his merry friends. Never before had he seemed so completely at his ease. To Miss Warwick, who was seated at his right, he showed every attention possible.

His father's eyes sparkled as he supposed the consummation of his victory was at hand; yet he could not understand why Will delayed speaking of his engagement. He had plenty of opportunity to speak with Miss Warwick before they entered the dining room—his father had seen to that!

"Well, Will," said he in an undertone, "are you going to make us your little speech now?"

"No, father," Will replied as low, "we will wait until to-night when all our friends are around us."

"Very well, my boy, choose your own time," he smiled cheerfully.

The supper was finished without further incident, and shortly after returning to the parlor fine

whirr of the bell announced that the evening guests were arriving.

Will received them one after another, and when at last Mr. and Mrs. Hahn were announced they were accompanied by Nina. Will shook hands with them all and when he came to Nina he whispered to her, "Don't watch me too closely, dear, you are a stranger to-night!"

Nina did not understand. "What could he mean," thought she sorrowfully. "I am a stranger to-night." Her Southern pride immediately was hurt: the pride of her race shone in those black eyes as she was presented to Mr. and Mrs. Harris. Truly, Nina preserved a queenly presence as she crossed the floor and took a seat near a little group in which was Miss Warwick.

Dancing was the programme of the evening. Will danced with all the ladies one after the other; no one was neglected.

Nina had been clasped in his arms for a fleeting moment; but in that moment she had been warned that he was playing a part and that she must help him by playing it well.

The hour was growing late. Refreshments had been announced and all the guests were assembled in the dining-room. Never before had the home of Mr. Harris been so gorgeously decorated. The sweet scent of rare flowers filled the air. Beautiful

women and stalwart men were gathered there all in Will's honor. Seated around the spacious table, they presented a brilliant, gay picture not soon to be forgotten.

Pleasant remarks were flitting back and forth, and peals of laughter rang through the room.

"Well, Will," cried Mr. Harris, "we are waiting to hear from you now."

Will rose slowly to his feet and resting one hand upon the table, he cast his eyes over the room while a smile flitted across his face.

"Friends," said he, "I wish to thank you for the warm greeting which you have extended to me. To-night I leave a boy's happy dreams and enter upon the man's sterner duties. And this is not all. To-night, I wish to make the announcement that a most happy incident has come into my life. May I not ask you all to drink the health of my future bride?"

"Her name! her name!" came from all parts of the room, as the glasses clinked gaily.

"Her name," responded Will, "is worthy of a special toast."

"To the bride! to the bride!" shouted Mr. Harris jumping to his feet. "Long may she live!"

The glasses were drained and once more the cry arose, "Her name! her name!"

"Fill your glasses to the brim, friends, while I drink twice to this toast."

Silence fell upon the gathering as their glasses were filled once more.

"Father, mother, friends all," said he as the color sprang to his cheeks, "I have the honor of presenting to you, Miss Nina Cosgrove, my future bride."

As he spoke Will reached for Nina's hand and drew her upward to her feet.

A shout burst forth. "Long live Miss Nina Cosgrove! Long live the future bride!" and the men sprang to their feet as they touched the uplifted glasses of their fair companions.

There was one in that assemblage who did not join in this well-wishing. Mr. Harris had risen to his feet. His face turned scarlet; then the blood as quickly left it, leaving it an ashen hue. The glass had fallen from his hand splashing the contents over the table. Grasping his chair to steady himself, he looked fixedly at Will.

"What do you mean, sir! How dare you insult me in my own house! Who is this woman, and where does she come from?" he demanded.

Mrs. Harris leaned over him and whispered, "She is the governess at Hahn's."

"Governess!" shouted the irate father, "do you suppose you are going to bring a governess into my family!"

"We will not discuss Miss Cosgrove here, father. I have asked for and received the consent of her guardians, Mr. and Mrs. Hahn, and I am going to marry her," his son replied, raising his voice that all might hear.

Mr. Harris turned his wrath upon Nina.

"Leave this house, you wretch! you impostor!" thundered he.

"If Miss Cosgrove leaves this house, father, under your command, I leave also!" threatened his son.

"Go!" cried Mr. Harris pointing to the door.

"And if you marry this woman I never want to see your face again—you cease to be a son of mine from that day."

The glasses crashed to the table from the guests' hands as they watched the departure of Will from the room.

He put his arm around Nina and closely followed by Mr. and Mrs. Hahn, the four immediately departed from the house.

"Will," said Mr. Hahn, taking his hand, "you played your part well; you need have no fear for the future."

"Thank you, Mr. Hahn. The prize for which I fought is worthy of the effort. To-morrow morning I will look for a new position."

"I have attended to that matter for you, Will. Knowing what the outcome would be, I spoke to a

friend of mine and he has made an opening for you. In the morning I will give you a letter to him and you will at once commence your new duties."

"It is very kind of you, sir, and I assure you I appreciate it."

Poor Nina! When the attack was made upon her she resorted to a woman's solace: tears flowed down her cheeks. Her only consolation in her trying position was the manly way in which Will had protected her.

Home, that new home for Will, where the door was thrown wide open to receive him, was at last reached.

"Nina," whispered Will, "we will be like old married folks now. You can watch for me every night when I come home from business and we will have all our evenings together."

"Yes, Will," she replied soberly, "that will atone for the horrid things your father said to-night."

"Do not feel too bitter against my father, little one. You know he was in a rage of disappointment; he hardly knew what he said to-night."

"Oh, I can forgive him, Will dear, if you wish it. I am sure I am happier at this moment than he is."

Will entered upon his new duties with all the energy he possessed. He was now working for Nina's sake! The second week brought him an increase in salary.

"You are worth more than I am paying you," said his employer, "and I have no more desire to cheat you than I have for you to be dishonest with me." Will was jubilant and the family gathered around the tea table at supper, rejoiced with him.

The wedding was often spoken of after that, for Will, with the impetuosity of youth, would listen to no delay.

"June," he said, "is the month of roses, and as Nina is the sweetest rose of the earth I speak for a June wedding."

"Here, here," interrupted Mr. Hahn, "Bessie still holds her own in the garden of roses—eh, dear?"

"Now, Tom," protested Mrs. Hahn, "there is some excuse for Will, but we have been married too long for such flattery. Let Will have his way. He has set the month, but Nina and I will set the day."

The tenth of June was finally decided upon and the preparations were commenced at once. The house seemed filled with ribbons and dress goods, and all the necessary fineries for a bride's outfit. And in the midst of all this confusion, there was a little miss of ten who claimed much attention; for Lillian was to be the maid of honor.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WEDDING.

THE sun on the wedding day rose bright and clear. At the Hahns' all were astir early, for though all preparations had been completed long ago yet there seemed a never-ending "something to do."

Will and Nina were too happy to be disturbed by trifling details of their marriage. The florist had converted the house into a flower garden. No one could enter this bower without an exclamation of surprise and wonder.

Nina saw all these preparations and her heart swelled with gratitude. Many times during the day she ran to Mrs. Hahn and throwing her arms around her neck told her how good she was and how she loved her.

"I can never express or show my full appreciation for all you have done for me," she exclaimed, "nor will I ever be able to repay you."

"My dear Nina," Mrs. Hahn replied, "don't you know that your devotion more than pays us for anything we can ever do for you?"

"You are too good to me," whispered Nina, "but oh, how I do love you for it."

Tom Hahn spared no expense in beautifying the house and the grounds. This was the first wedding since their own in which they could claim a personal interest, and they determined that it should be as elaborate as theirs had been plain. When they were married Tom Hahn had not been a rich man. The tradespeople one and all had received a like order from him. "Give us the best you can produce," and they exerted themselves to the utmost. The results were as luxurious as had ever been seen in luxurious New York.

The church was decorated from floor to dome. Everywhere lilies were in evidence. The chancel was one mass of spotless blossoms. In the background foliage completely flanked the decorations and white satin ribbon ran from pew to pew fastened to the end of each seat with a bunch of snowwhite lilies of the valley.

When all was in readiness for the bridal pair the choristers took their places, the minister stood waiting in the chancel and all the vast gathering of friends filled the church and craned their necks for a first glimpse of the bride. Suddenly the door was flung open and a stern-looking man with a timid lady clinging to his arm strode up the centre isle

to the front of the church and unclasping the ribbon on the pew entered it.

A whisper spread from mouth to mouth. "It's Mr. Harris!" and the curious-minded wondered what crisis was afoot, as it was well known that the father had been estranged from his son and his presence in the church now created much comment.

Music filled the church as the soft strains of Lohengrin's wedding march rolled from the massive organ. Once more the door opened and this time the bridal party entered, slowly and solemnly.

Nina was a trifle pale, but how beautiful she looked in the white satin gown, over which flowed her bridal veil crowned with orange blossoms. Lillian's large blue eyes were full of wonder as she stepped daintily before the bride scattering rose petals.

Will stood at the chancel rail and received Nina. Truly they were a handsome couple! The solemn voice of the minister pronounced the words that made them man and wife. Once more the organ pealed forth, but now in joyous congratulation to the newly wedded pair.

The procession started for the door; but as Nina reached the pew where Mr. and Mrs. Harris were seated she paused; then, as if acting on the impulse of the moment, she dropped to her knees and bowed her head before Will's father. Will was down be-

side her in an instant. For a moment Mr. Harris stood rigid, then resting a hand on their heads he whispered, "Children, may God forgive me-and bless you. I have done wrong but am very sorry for it." Nina and Will arose and as the bridal procession continued, Mr. and Mrs. Harris dropped behind the bride and groom and followed them to the door. Surrounded by loving friends, they left the church and drove rapidly to the Hahns' home where a splendid, jubilant reception followed and of all those present there was none more cordial or affable to the youthful couple than Mr. Harris. A heavy load had been lifted from his mind when he took the step which led to his reunion with his son again. Following this delightful time Will and Nina left on a late train for Niagara Falls on their honeymoon.

CHAPTER X.

"JUST A KNIGHT OF FORTUNE."

Four brigands were seated around a blazing camp-fire in the Catskill Mountains waiting for news from the Catskill village. Jim Lambert, one of the gang, had just finished telling his companions all that he knew of Mr. Hahn.

"That fellow is worth millions, and when he finds out that we mean business he will hand over all we ask and be thankful to get off so lightly."

"Well, Jim, for my part, if I get fifty thousand I'm going to get out of here. I know of a little place over in Germany that I can buy, and that's where I'd go," spoke up one of the men.

"Do you mean to say, Dick, that you would break up the gang, if we made this haul?" demanded Lambert.

"No, I don't want exactly to break up the gang, but when a fellow's got enough to live on what's the use in taking chances!"

"Say, Dick, you've got a white streak in you

somewhere, and if I knew where it was I'd take this knife here and cut it out."

- "You would, eh? Well, you'd be pretty lucky if there was anything left of you after you tried it."
- "See here, Lambert," Bob put in. "You know you are no match for Dick, so what's the use in picking a fuss with him. Your head's all right; but he's got the muscle."
- "I'm not so sure of that, Bob. Just because he is a big hulk don't say that I can't down him."
- "If you think you are a better man than I am, stand up," said Dick. As he spoke he sprang to his feet, drawing a huge knife from his belt.

Bob jumped in between them.

"What are you fellows going to do?" demanded he. "It's time to use them things when we are cornered. What did we take an oath for anyhow?"

Dick gave his knife a twirl and sent it flying through the air. It stuck into a big tree near by.

"Come on, Jim, drop that carver and I'll give you a throw just for fun."

The two men stripped to the waist. What a contrast there was between them. Dick with his brawny arms and massive shoulders seemed to tower above his antagonist. The bout had been declared "just for fun;" yet as these two men stood glaring at each other it was plain to be seen that the heated

words which had passed between them had left their impression.

"Are you ready?" questioned Dick.

"Yes," replied Jim.

Dick stepped forward as though he intended to walk right over his man. As he approached, Jim crouched for a moment, then made a spring, catching Dick around the neck, and placing his hip beneath him gave him a toss in the air. Dick dropped with a thud: it sounded as though all his bones were broken, and, indeed, for a moment he seemed to think they were, as he lay there gasping for breath.

"What are you lying there for, Dick?" asked Jim. "If you want any more, get up."

Dick got to his feet. "Just you wait a minute until I get my breath, and I'll break your back for that!" he gasped.

Bob pulled out his watch and amid the shouts of his companions, called out, "You only get two minutes between falls, Dick. Time's up!"

Dick did not purpose to be caught by the same trick twice; so he was on the lookout for that crouch and spring, but it never came. Jim kept circling around him, careful never to let this giant get a hold on him. When he saw Dick off his guard for a moment he stepped right in and slipped one leg between Dick's, at the same time throwing the weight of his body against him. Dick never knew what

happened. He and the ground came in contact with such force that it was some minutes before he realized what had occurred.

"I can do that-don't you believe me?"

The speaker was Ed Hahn, who had closely watched the bout.

"Go on," said Dick. "All you're good for is to clean the pots round here."

Ed made no reply, but proceeded to remove his coat, vest and shirt. Then he stood ready to wrestle with any of them.

- "Give him a throw, Jim!" laughed Dick.
- "What's the matter? Do you want him to get some of your medicine?" Jim inquired scoffingly.
- "Well, it'll take some of the conceit out of him," Dick commented.
- "Come on then, lad," cried Jim, as he placed himself in a position for an aggressive attack.

Ed stepped forward. It had never before been noticed how light this boy was on his feet. Now as he moved around on the green turf, under the shade of the massive trees, it became evident that Jim was not going to have it all his own way. For some minutes the man and boy circled around each other looking for an opening to obtain a favorite hold.

At last Jim made a spring and grabbing Ed round the body endeavored to bend his back and force him to the ground. Ed, however, was not so easily vanquished. Doubling up his arms he crowded his clenched fists into the pit of Jim's stomach and the harder Jim squeezed the deeper the knuckles penetrated.

Jim realized that he was getting the worst of it and let go his hold. In an instant, quicker than the others could follow, Ed secured a hold and forced his man to the ground, where he sat astride him, holding him there firmly.

Jim was not satisfied, but wanted to try conclusions again. It would have been well for him, however, if he had not; as, on this occasion, Ed secured a favorite hold and sent Jim flying through the air. When he reached the ground he came in contact with a large stone that bruised him so he had no further use for wrestling for some time.

This did not interfere with the sport, however, for Ed was called upon to try a fall with the other three men; after which they were all ready to admit that he was fit for something better than washing pots.

Still no response came through the "Zephyr" from Mr. Hahn, and the men could not keep still, so Charley and Jim made a nocturnal excursion into Tannersville. The country was all new to them and they moved quietly around the village looking for prey.

After much deliberation they decided to enter a handsome villa on the outskirts of the settlement. At a quarter past twelve they forced an entrance but seeing nothing on the first floor went upstairs and proceeded to ransack the rooms there, the inmates of which were quietly slumbering.

After gathering up all the jewelry and money they could find on the second floor Charley suggested they visit the attic.

"It's no use, Charley," Jim whispered, "you'll not find anything there."

"Well, Jim, I'm going up and look around, just for luck."

"All right, go ahead, if you want to. I'll meet you down by the gate."

Jim moved cautiously downstairs. As he reached the first floor he was suddenly seized by the throat and forced against the wall.

"Don't make an outcry or I'll blow your head off!" a deep voice hissed into his ear.

The caution was unnecessary, for Jim's breath was entirely shut off by the vice-like grip on his throat. He was completely overpowered.

Had Charley found anything to occupy his time in the attic, it is hard to say what would have become of Jim Lambert; but, fortunately, he did not tarry. As he reached the lower flight of steps, more through instinct than sight, he realized that there was some disturbance below and took it for granted that his partner was concerned in it.

He hurried to his assistance.

The man who was holding Jim heard Charley approach and supposing him, like the man he had just attacked, to be an inmate of the house, endeavored to make his escape. It was Jim's time now to hold on and he did so with a will, while Charley came quickly to his aid.

Their first precaution was to place a gag in the man's mouth. This done, they marched him out of the house and off into the woods.

A peculiar feature of this encounter was, both sides were intent upon keeping silence.

"What will we do with this fellow, Jim?" asked Charley.

"Take him about half a mile from the house and tie him to a tree," Jim answered. "If you hadn't come down just as you did I'd had my knife between his ribs."

The men picked up the prostrate one and started off with him.

"I'm glad you didn't. It's all right to take the stuff, but I'm against killing anybody if we can help it."

They penetrated deep into the forest, and when they arrived at a safe distance from the house just looted, called a halt.

- "What are we going to tie him with?" asked Lambert.
- "Don't know," said Charley, "maybe, I've got some heavy cord with me."

The man by this time was making frantic motions to them.

- "What's the matter with you?" Charley demanded.
- "He wants to say something. Take the gag off, Charley. No one could hear if he yelled his lungs out here."

Charley obeyed. The man drew a long breath as though it were a privilege indeed to be allowed free air again.

- "Say," said he, "are you fellows crooks?"
- "No," Jim answered. "We are gentlemen whose misfortunes in life have compelled us to help ourselves. Hence we take whatever is not securely fastened down."
- "That's rich," said the man wonderingly. "I went there to do that job myself. Say, fellows, how did you get in?"
- "We broke through a rear window," was the answer.
- "That's good! I guess them people will think a gatling gun has been turned loose on them. I busted a front window."
 - "Who are you, anyway?" Jim asked.

- "Just a knight of fortune doing odd jobs as I tour the country," answered the man. "But say, I'll bet you're the fellows that drove me out of Palenville. Didn't you have a hand in the Casino affair?"
- "Why don't you lay that Hahn racket to us, too?" retorted Jim.
- "Why? Why, because I did that myself. Those damned women made such a fuss I was nearly pinched there."
- "How are you fixed?" questioned Jim, growing solicitous.
- "Dead broke, pard," said the man. "I've been up against hard luck lately."
- "Charley, what do you say; shall we take him into camp with us?"
- "Guess we'd better; and give him something to eat."
 - "What's your name, stranger?"
- "Anything you like, boys. I guess I've had about every name a fellow could go by. Allen's what I'm most used to."
- "Well, Allen, come along or the sun will be up before we get around the village. You see, supposing you to belong to the house up there, we brought you in the opposite direction from our camp, and now we've got to get back."

The three men started to retrace their steps, giving the village a wide berth.

- "How many have you got in your gang?" asked Allen.
 - "Four," Jim answered.
 - "Are you doing much business up here?"
 - "No, we are playing for bigger game."
 - "Is that so? What's your lay?"
- "Look here, Allen. All we asked of you was your name. Now don't go poking your nose into things that don't concern you."
- "It ain't none of my affairs," replied Allen.
 "Only as we are all in the same line I didn't see any harm in asking."

The men walked for some time in silence.

- "Now, see here," Jim remarked. "You want to mind your own business. We'll give you your breakfast but we want you to keep your mouth shut, do you understand?"
- "Can't say that I do," Allen answered. "What good is the breakfast going to do me, if I've got to keep my mouth shut?"

Charley laughed. "There's a nut for you to crack, Jim," he cried.

"Well, I'll crack it. We will give him his breakfast and let him eat it as he moves on. You fellows talk too much, and it's a bad business to have a stranger around." When the camp-fire was sighted, it could be seen that preparations for breakfast had begun. Allen seated himself as though he had always been one of the party.

"I thought you said there were only four of you," he said.

"That's all," replied Jim curtly. "That fellow," pointing towards Ed, "is only a servant."

"Only a servant," interjected Ed. "I'd like you to know that I'm boss of this camp and if anyone thinks I'm not, let him take off his coat."

"There's your chance to get up an appetite, Allen," commented Jim. "Try a throw with him."

"None of it for me," Allen growled. "I'll save my strength for breakfast."

Ed seemed to feel the importance of his new prestige. He not only refused to do the dirty work around the camp but presumed to give orders, and not infrequently would enforce them with a shove or even a kick.

The novelty of having a servant was wearing off and the men commenced to complain. Dick was in favor of stringing him up to teach him a lesson.

"Guess you can stand it for a while," Jim said.
"We will hear from his father to-morrow or the next day."

"Ho, ho," thought Allen. "Their servant's a prisoner. It's a ransom game they're up to, by Jove.

I'll bet I know who it is at that." Turning towards Ed he asked, "What's your name, Jack?"

- "Ed," came the answer.
- "I thought so," chuckled Allen. Then turning towards the group at the camp-fire he called out.
 - "Say, fellows, don't I come in on this ransom?"
 - "What ransom?" asked Jim, eyeing him closely.
- "Why the ransom for Ed Hahn here. You see, I let him out and deserve my share."
- "We don't know any Ed Hahn," Jim said; "and if we did we wouldn't divide. I told you there was only four in our gang."
- "That's kind of a shady way to treat a fellow. If it hadn't been for me, you would not have got your hands on him."
- "Well," Jim said, "there are only four of us, and that's all there is about it."

On the following day about dusk a man was seen walking along the road near Palenville. Every few steps he would turn his head and look up the side of the mountain, then mutter something to himself.

This man wore a long coat and a slouch hat. The latter was well pulled down over his eyes hiding the greater part of his face. A workman was coming in the opposite direction. The man stopped and waited until the workman approached.



"Will you take the letter up there for me?"

PU: SAN Y



- "Say, neighbor," he remarked, "are you going as far as Mr. Hahn's house?"
 - "Yes," said the workman, "I go right past it."
- "Will you take this letter up there for me. There is a quarter in it for you."
- "Sure," said the workman, "and I wouldn't mind bringing you an answer if there's a quarter in that."

"There won't be any answer, though."

The two men parted. The one with the long coat went directly to the old turning mill and sat down, as though awaiting someone. The workman went on up the road and delivered the letter at Mr. Hahn's house as directed. Mr. Hahn was talking to Mr. Spy when it was brought in. He opened it and read aloud:

"Mr. Hahn,

Your son is held a prisoner in the mountains. If you will meet me to-night near the old turning mill I will arrange with you to guide a party to capture him. I'm on the level and if you are the same you should have your son inside of two days.

ALLEN."

Mr. Hahn rested the paper on his knees and looked over at Mr. Spy.

"Do you know this old turning mill, Mr. Hahn?" asked Mr. Spy.

10

"Perfectly," replied Mr. Hahn, "and a lonely spot it is, too, to prowl around at this time of night."

"We cannot consider such things. What we want is to find your son; and if this fellow has the information he claims we cannot afford to neglect it."

Mr. Hahn and the detective armed themselves and went out.

In the meantime, Allen, seated on a fallen log, was thinking of the past and future. "Guess those fellows don't know that everybody around these parts is looking for that thousand dollars. They better had given me two hundred and quit even. Now they won't get a smell of it. There is only one in this gang!

"Wonder if Hahn will come down here. I dasn't go to the village, that's sure. Gee! They'd have me pinched before I could wink an eye. Wait until I get that thousand, though. They don't see me around here again in a hurry."

Allen stepped behind a tree as he heard voices drawing near.

"This is the place, sir, but I don't see anyone around."

"We will wait awhile; perhaps he has not arrived yet."

"I wonder who that other fellow can be," thought

Allen. "Guess if I want to find out I will have to show myself."

He stepped from behind the tree and addressing the two men said:

"Gentlemen, your names, please?"

Mr. Spy answered. "This gentleman is Mr. Hahn. Who are you?"

"After you, sir; I asked for both your names."

"My name is Spy, sir, I am visiting Mr. Hahn."

"Very good, gentlemen. My name is Allen and I sent for you, Mr. Hahn, because I know where your son is and am willing to lead a gang of your men to get him, providing, of course, you comply with your promise."

"What promise do you refer to, my man?"

"The reward," replied Allen.

"Oh, yes; the thousand dollars. You shall have every penny of it, if you earn it."

"All right, sir. I guess I can trust you. Here is my plan. There are four in the gang who hold your son. They are desperate men. We should have at least eight—two to one. We will have to get to the camp at night, so that they will not get wind of us.

"There is another thing I want settled. If we get the boy, I get my money and am allowed to flit?"

- "That's all right," said Mr. Spy, "but you have not told us yet how you came to know all this."
- "Well, you see, sir, I was crossing the mountain from Tannersville when I fell upon these fellows and ate breakfast with them. I recognized your son, sir, from the description I had read in Tannersville."
- "Well, Mr. Hahn, we have to take this man's word for it. You stay here," said Mr. Spy, turning to Allen, "and we will have our party ready to start in an hour."
- "No," suggested Allen, "it would be better I meet you just beyond Mr. Hahn's house, as we will have to take that road."
- "All right," was the reply. "Just beyond Mr. Hahn's house, then."
- "What do you think of this man Allen?" asked Mr. Hahn when they had got beyond earshot of the latter.
- "I think he is a crook of the first water, but that does not prevent him from being valuable to us."
- "True," agreed Mr. Hahn, "providing he is not playing us false."
 - "Why should he do that-what would he gain?"
 - "He might be leading us into a trap."
- "It's not likely, sir. If that were his game he would not tell us to take eight men along. He probably has some score to settle with these other fel-

They had no difficulty in finding the men required, and within the hour they were once more with Allen.

"Is there any way we can ride there?" asked Mr. Hahn.

"Yes," said Allen. "We can ride to Tannersville, if you want to spend the money. Then we've got about four hours' walk."

"We can't do that to-night," said Mr. Hahn, "but we can take the first train over in the morning and stay around the village until night. Then we will not be all tired out."

This course was followed. Sam, who was one of the party going into the mountains, had been keeping a close watch on Allen. "There's something about that fellow that's familiar to me," thought he. "I wonder where I have seen him before."

Since the loss of Ed, Sam had not had much to say but had formed the habit of watching everybody. In fact, at times, he carried this failing so far that it became annoying.

"I've got to find Ed, and that's all there is about it."

The party, on arriving at Tannersville, went to

the hotel, and into the bar. As they passed through the door leading into the bar-room a man glanced up from a newspaper he was reading. As he looked them over he pulled the paper up before his face, and the next moment stepped out of a side door, near which he had been sitting. No one seemed to have been aware of his presence as he strolled down the road.

As night approached, the little party, guided by Allen, started out through the woods, after having taken the precaution of providing themselves with lanterns. The road to the camp lay through a dense forest, and ofttimes the men would have to pick their way, great caution being necessary that they should not get separated.

On they went, experiencing many emotions. As for Mr. Hahn, the one thought that consoled him was that he would soon see his son. Sam had firmly made up his mind if there was going to be a fight he would stick close to Mr. Hahn and if possible prevent any injury being done him. For himself he was indifferent what the outcome might be.

Sam felt that all this misfortune lay at his door. Had he taken the precaution to lock Ed in, there would have been none of this worry and expense.

A dead silence had fallen on the party as they moved along as secretly as possible. Allen raised his

hand and called a halt: he had seen the flickering embers of the camp-fire.

"This is the place!" he continued. "Now we had better surround it and close in on them. Don't make a noise whatever you do."

Fifteen minutes were allowed for the men to be stationed, and as agreed upon when the hands of the watch pointed to the hour of ten they all made a rush, hoping to surprise the outlaws as they slept.

There was a surprise, indeed; for all they caught were the smouldering embers of the camp fire. The men had evidently departed in haste, for close investigation revealed a number of their belongings lying about. A box half filled with cigars was found lying beneath a tree close by.

Everything was gathered up and closely examined by Mr. Spy. True to his calling, this man never let the slightest detail escape him. Among the things found was a pair of dirty cuffs, which contained gold buttons having the letters E. H. inlaid with diamonds.

"Look here, Mr. Hahn. Do you recognize these?" asked the detective.

"Yes," said Mr. Hahn. "I gave these buttons to Ed on his birthday, just before he met with the accident."

"That proves, then, that this man Allen was

honest with us," said Mr. Spy. "Your son has been here and that very recently."

"Yes, I believe he has, Mr. Spy; but that does not give him back to me. However, I will give Allen something for his trouble."

Sam was prowling around in an endeavor to find out which direction the captors had taken; but they seemed to have left absolutely no tracks behind them.

"We can accomplish nothing by standing here," said Mr. Hahn. "So we had better get back to the hotel and have what rest we can before morning."

"Good-by, Mr. Hahn," spoke up Allen. "I think some one must have tipped them off."

"Well you did the best you could, Allen—though it is a great disappointment to me of course. If you ever get track of them again, let me know at once. In the mean time, put this in your pocket; it may help you."

He handed Allen a fifty-dollar bill to encourage him to renew his efforts. As the man then went his way, the rest of the party turned their steps towards Tannersville where they stayed until morning. In the morning Mr. Spy and Sam returned to the scene of the flight from the camp, while the others left for Palenville.

"I'm thinking, Mr. Spy," said Sam, "that maybe

that fellow Allen isn't all straight goods. I don't like the looks of his face."

- "You don't have to think twice about that, Sam. I am as sure of him as if I knew his whole record, but he treated us square enough, I think."
 - "Maybe he did, sir, but I wouldn't trust him."
- "Well, I don't think you will ever be called upon to; he doesn't seem to like this country here any better than you like him."

As Mr. Spy and Sam entered the natural clearing in the forest, it seemed an ideal spot for just such characters as had recently occupied it. They searched carefully every inch of ground but there was absolutely nothing that would indicate the direction in which the men had gone, the undergrowth being trampled all around the camp. A few additional trinkets, which had been part of their most recent robbery, were all they could discover.

- "Well, Sam," the detective remarked, "I guess we may as well follow the rest of the party and go back to Hahn's."
- "I am not going back there any more, sir," Sam said with decision, "not until I find Ed, anyhow."
 - "All your things are there, aren't they?"
- "Yes, sir, but I won't have any use for them out here. I've a little money, enough to get me a gun, and I'll make that earn my living for me."

- "You had better come back with me and tell Mr. Hahn."
- "No, sir; he would want to pay me off, and I don't want any of his money; I don't deserve it, sir!" said the man doggedly.
- "All right, Sam; just as you say. Shall I give any messages to Mr. Hahn for you?"
- "Yes, sir, if you will, please. Tell him that I am still looking for Ed."
 - "Anything else?"
- "No, sir; I guess that's about all he will want to hear from me."

Sam accompanied him to Tannersville, where he bade him good-by. When Mr. Spy reported Sam's message to Mr. Hahn, he said:

"That's too bad, Sam's an honest fellow, and I shall be sorry not to have him around. Besides, I cannot blame him for Ed's flight. He was called from his room in a hurry to protect the women and any one would have done as he did."

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAN OF THE WOODS.

EAGER to keep informed of all that was going on and hoping that they might pick up a Palenville paper, Bob had been sent into Tannersville on the morning that Mr. Hahn's party had arrived there. It was he who had been in the bar-room as they entered. His first glance was enough to explain the whole situation. "Allen," said he to himself, "wants to cut us out!"

He hastily left the room, fearing that Allen might recognize him. As soon as he passed the village he quickened his stride, covering the ground at a rapid gait. He rushed into camp tired and out of breath. "Break camp, boys," he cried, "and get out of here as quickly as you can. That fellow Allen has peached on us and has brought a crowd up to Tannersville. They may be at our heels at any moment!"

Never since these four men had come together did they move quicker than now, and in an hour

they were ready to move into a new field, but the question of importance was, which way to move? Which direction to take? Finally, they decided to move back into the Clove, where they would still be in touch with Mr. Hahn.

After looking around, they found a quiet spot, from which they commanded a good view of the valley, at the same time being completely concealed by the brush.

"Now," said Jim, "I think I will teach that fellow Hahn a lesson." Taking pen and paper out of his kit, he wrote:

" Mr. Hahn.

Dear Sir,

When you start out to hunt the fox, do not neglect to take a fox-dog along. A rabbit dog like your friend Allen is too slow for the chase. It would also be as well for you to know that the next time you lay a trap for us we will leave the bait, your son; but you will never get your fingers on us.

If we ever get Allen in our clutches again, he will be strung up to a tree.

We will give you this last chance to recover your son. If, within the next ten days, you do not publish your acceptance of our offer in the Zephyr we will put your son to death, as we do not wish

to be encumbered with a half-witted boy. Remember, sir, this is final.

I remain, sir,

Your humble servant,

Jim addressed the envelope and handed it to Dick. "Here, Dick," said he; "you have never been to Tannersville, so you can take this over and mail it. Keep a sharp lookout for that fellow Allen. If he should see you he might make more trouble."

The letter was duly posted, and Dick returned to the camp with the information that the whole party had left the village.

For a week the four men lay around, playing cards and smoking cigars. This, however, was not to their taste. They were active men and wanted to be doing something. On the ninth day after their arrival at the new camp, Jim called a council of war.

"Boys," said he, "it commences to look to me as though Hahn meant to fight this thing out. I have noticed several parties searching the woods on the other side of the Clove. No doubt, they will be over here before long. Now what do you say to cleaning up this district in good shape and then clearing out? We can put for the Adirondacks, or cross over to the Berkshire Hills. We've got to keep in the mountains somewhere, so it will be hard to follow us."

"I'm in for that," said Bob. "Keep the ball rolling. We can scoop in enough out of this Clove to pay us well."

The men paired off, and every night one couple or the other would enter some house in the Clove or confine their depredations to a neighboring village. This state of affairs could not long endure. The country round was up in arms. Meeting after meeting was held to contrive some plan to drive off the marauders. Finally, a general hunt was decided on. The best dogs that could be found were engaged to follow the trail. When all were assembled, about forty men and twenty-five dogs had been gathered together.

All the women and children of the village turned out to see them off. This was to be the greatest hunt ever held in the district—this hunt for men.

Gus, it was conceded, owned the best dog for picking up the scent, and it was to him the honor was given of starting off the hounds. Gus went directly to a house that had been looted the night before, and after keeping his dog's nose to the ground for a few seconds, turned him loose.

The dog sniffed the air, then, placing his nose to the ground, traveled around the house until he reached the back door. Here he gave vent to one of those long baying calls that so delights the hunter's heart. It was there the men had entered.

"Hunt them up, Sport," cried Gus. "Hunt them up!"

The dog seemed undecided for a moment. Then striking the trail leading from the house, he started off on a full run. The pack was now turned loose; quickly falling in behind Sport, they rushed up the valley followed by the men, covering the ground as fast as they could.

At the camp, breakfast had just been served. Bob had taken a pair of field-glasses and stepped out on a large rock to look round. Scarcely had he raised the glasses to his eyes when a cry of alarm escaped him.

"Good Lord, Jim, come here!" he exclaimed pointing down the Clove.

"What's the matter, Bob?" asked Jim.

"Don't know; but it looks as though the whole village was on parade, coming up the Clove."

"The devil!" stammered Jim, as he rushed forward and snatched the glasses from Bob's eyes.

For a moment only did they stand and look. Then turning towards the camp Jim called out:

"Break camp, boys, double quick. We've got to fly for our lives! These fellows never started out to hunt squirrels with that pack of hounds."

"Let me take a look," yelled Charley.

"You fool!" roared Jim. "We haven't any time to waste. There is an army of them coming

up here. Throw all this heavy stuff over the rocks there into the bushes. If they don't find it we can pick it up some day."

In great excitement the men rushed here and there in obedience to Jim's orders. He did all the directing, while the rest of the gang did the work. Ed Hahn, not knowing the meaning of it all, joined in with a will, working as hard as any of them.

"Which way shall we go, Jim?" asked Bob.

"Down the mountain, we can make better time that way. The dogs would soon have us if we attempted to go up. Keep your guns handy, boys. We will have to fight our way through this. Remember, if we get separated, it's Otis Junction. If we can catch a train there for Catskill we will take it. If not, we will have to double on our trail and take the car up the mountain."

The men started down the steep grade. They ran as fast as they could, keeping Ed in the centre all the while. As they reached the valley, they could hear the yelping of the dogs that bounded on, keeping their noses close to the ground.

"They won't be so fresh after they've gone up that hill," said Jim, as he listened to the clamor they were making.

On rushed the men. They were now passing down the other side of the Clove. Nearer and nearer the barking came until the men and dogs

were abreast of one another. Jim paused long enough to look at the scene opposite him.

"That's a beautiful bunch," he remarked, "but I don't want any closer acquaintance with them."

The dogs passed on and their noise became fainter and fainter.

"The next time we hear those brutes," said Dick, "they will be right behind us."

"They won't be as close together as they are now, though," said Jim. "Some of them will be falling behind by that time."

On went the men, straining every nerve and muscle that they might hold the lead. Nor was there much talking. They wanted to save their breath for the final struggle.

"Hark!" cried Charley. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes," said Jim. "They are heading our way and we will never reach Otis Junction before they are on us. If we get separated, boys, go to the old place on the Bowery."

The baying of the dogs was growing louder and louder. The men were tiring and were compelled to slacken their pace.

"Scatter," cried Jim. "We will have a better chance that way."

As the men separated, Jim looked back. There, not a hundred yards away, came the leader of the pack rushing down upon them. Jim drew his pis-

tol and whirled around. The next instant a report echoed through the forest. The dog sprang into the air and fell dead.

"That's one less," muttered Jim, as he turned from the path and plunged through the brush. A moment later another shot was heard, then another. The yelping of the dogs told that more than one had been hit.

Soon the forest rang with shots from all directions. The fight was now on in earnest.

The fugitives were provided with two pistols each, which meant twelve shots for each man, before their weapons became useless; for in this running fight they would not have time to reload.

Had each shot hit its mark they would soon have been freed from the dogs, but unfortunately for that their aim was not true, and where their last shot had been fired there were still a number of the pursuing hounds. Jim Lambert had made good his escape; he was no longer pursued. Going straight on to Otis Junction, he was just in the nick of time—a train was pulling out for Catskill Village, and more dead than alive he swung aboard.

When he reached the West Shore R. R., he left the train to climb the hill. He had not gone a hundred feet when a heavy hand fell on his shoulder, and a voice sounded in his ears. "You are under arrest, sir!" The words chilled Lambert to the heart. He ducked and at the same time drew his knife determined to fight to the last. As he swung round, there stood Bob.

- "My God, Bob! You scared me. You may do that thing once too often. If my gun had been loaded I would have shot before I had time to recognize you."
- "Well, Jim, we're clear. But I wonder what has become of Dick and Charley?"
- "Don't know," said Jim. "But I hope one of them has got Ed Hahn."
- "They're lucky if they've got themselves, Jim. What do you say if we hang around here for a while and see if they turn up?"
- "All right, Bob. I guess we're safe for a while. I hate to leave them without knowing how they made out."

With Dick it was a very serious matter. His massive muscles had been a hindrance to him in his flight. He could not run as fast as the others, so he was the first to be overtaken.

Seven of the dogs had followed his trail, and do the best he could, he had managed to dispose of only three of them. Driven to bay, Dick drew his knife and started to slash right and left. The dogs fought fiercely, tearing his clothes to shreds and biting him in many places. Dick was now fighting for his life, with every bit of strength left in him,

when one of the dogs that had not felt the point of his blade, made a spring and catching him by the throat, bore him to the ground. As he fell a second dog seized him by the arm.

Dick's last hope vanished—the knife having fallen from his hand—as the savage animal's teeth pierced his flesh. There he lay helpless and being worried and torn when, crack! a rifle sounded at no great distance. The dog at his throat sprang into the air and dropped dead. Another report followed, and Sam came running to Dick's side.

"What's the matter here?" cried Sam.

Dick made no reply. He lay as one dead. As large as Dick was, Sam managed to get him on his back and carry him to a stream of water, where he laid him on the mossy bank. Then dipping his hand-kerchief into the water he washed Dick's wounds.

"Now," said he, "I ought to have some bandages." As he spoke he looked down at his shirt, a white one, with which he had left Mr. Hahn's "That's a bit dirty," he reflected, "but I guess it's all I've got." Sam wasted no time in taking it off, and, tearing it into strips, he proceeded to bind Dick's torn flesh.

"This is a bad job," he muttered, "the poor fellow is pretty badly chewed up. Reckon I'd better not leave him."

If Sam had not been so busily engaged, he prob-

ably would have heard the voices of the men who had followed the dogs. They found the dog, which Jim had shot, then came upon the dead bodies of the other hounds. When they reached the spot where Dick had made his last stand, they halted.

"Some fellow has gotten a pretty rough deal here," said one of the men.

"Yes," said another, "but he was able to walk away, and that's more than these dogs were."

The barking had ceased; the dogs had all been killed; there was nothing to guide the hunters. They traveled on; but this time they went in the wrong direction, and when night came on they returned to the village much disgusted, for they had caught none of the men but had left many a valuable hunter on the mountain side.

Charley had pursued different tactics. When he saw that the dogs were closing in upon him, he took to a tree and when out of reach quietly reloaded his revolvers and, as he expressed it, "had fine sport-it was regular target practice with them." When the last of his pursuers lay dead, he had slid down from the tree and struck out through the woods at right angles to the path he had been following.

He roamed through the woods for several days being afraid to show himself near any settlement. On the evening of the second day, as he was leis-

urely strolling along, he detected the odor of smoke.

"Hello!" exclaimed he, "there is something going on around here." Stealthily moving in the direction whence the smoke came he saw a fire burning brightly and two men seated near it.

Charley recognized Dick's figure, though it would have been impossible to have told who he was by his face, as Sam's bandages had left nothing exposed but his nose and mouth.

The other man Charley did not know. "I wonder if that fellow is holding Dick a prisoner? Guess I had better find out," he thought.

Charley walked towards the fire and addressed Sam as he pointed his finger towards Dick.

"What have you got there, neighbor?"

Sam looked up first at Charley then at Dick. "Oh he's a chap I found over here with a couple of dogs chewing him up," he replied slowly.

- "Looks to me as though they had had a pretty good meal."
- "I guess they would have had, if I hadn't showed up, eh, mister?"
 - "Guess that's right."
- "What are you doing for him?" Charley went on.
 - "Nothing much. Only tied him up, that's all."
- "That won't do. You ought to get some medicine to dress them cuts with."

- "I thought of that," said Sam, "but I haven't any money and then, too, I didn't think I ought to leave him alone yet a while."
- "You're right, boss. But now I'm with you, you can get the stuff in the morning. I'll stay here and attend to him."

Sam agreed to go, and bright and early on the following morning started off. Hardly was he out of sight when Charley went over to Dick.

- "Can you walk, Dick?"
- "Yes, I can walk all right, Charley. They didn't chew my legs off."
- "That's good. We want to get out of here before that fellow gets back."
 - "Aren't you going to wait for him?"
 - "No," said Charley, "we will give him the slip."
 - "What did you give him that money for, then?"
- "Well, I thought he deserved something for having taken care of you."
 - "Gee! you're getting generous," muttered Dick.
- "A fellow never made anything by being mean, Dick; and by the time he gets that medicine and a new shirt he won't have an awful lot left."

Dick and Charley took things easy and made their way to Kingston, where they boarded the boat for New York, arriving at their old quarters before Jim or Bob put in an appearance. The question of

general interest was, as each man came in without their prisoner, "Where is Ed Hahn?"

No one could answer that question. He had been lost sight of soon after Jim Lambert had given the order to scatter.

But now to return to Ed Hahn.

After the party had separated he had followed Charley for a short distance, then coming to a stream of water, he waded down its course and in a short time was beyond the reach of his pursuers. He realized that he was fleeing from some one, whether friend or foe he had not the mind to consider.

As night came on he commenced to feel lonesome. The pangs of hunger were gnawing him acutely. To get something to eat was his first concern; yet where that something was to come from he had no idea.

On through the dark he went until halted by a faint glimmer of light. Ed's life with his captors had taught him many sneaking habits, and now instead of approaching the light like an honest man he hung around at some distance until it was extinguished, and all within the house were asleep. Then cautiously approaching, he searched for something to eat.

He thought he had looked everywhere and was about to give up, when he espied an old-fashioned ice chest on the rear porch. Raising the lid Ed struck a match to reveal the contents.

A feast lay before him. Without fear he sat down to enjoy himself, and when he had satisfied the inner man he wrapped the rest of the food in a paper and left the house. He now directed his steps up the mountain side and after wandering for an hour or so lay down under a tree and was soon fast asleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when Ed awoke. He breakfasted on a portion of the food stolen and having nothing to detain him moved on. This aimless wandering continued all day, and was followed by a night spent like the previous one.

When he rose on the second morning he looked round him. The scenes before his ey were more familiar than anything he had seen since he had taken to the stream to avoid the dogs.

He was beneath their recent camp, and it was not long before he had located all the plunder that had been abandoned. The spot was wild and picturesque and just suited Ed's temperament. He concluded to stay there. Overhead hung the huge rock on which Bob had stood when he sighted the party coming up the Clove.

He walked under the rock as far as he could; then dropping on his hands and knees crawled on. To his great surprise he found, though it was grow-

ing very dark and he could not see a foot before him, that there was nothing to stop him.

He tried to turn round but found that the passage was too narrow, so backed out. Without difficulty he found a box of matches that had been stolen from one of the village stores, and then re-entered beneath the rock to examine it.

For twenty feet he was compelled to crawl upon his hands and knees, when suddenly he found the walls about him no longer confined him. Striking a match, he looked about: but nowhere could he see a wall save the one behind him.

Once more he made a trip to the entrance, and when he returned he had a bundle of papers under his arm. Setting fire to these, he soon had the place illuminated. Great was his amazement at still being unable to see the end of the cave, though the side walls were now discernable as well as the vaulted ceiling that at this point was not high.

He picked up some dried bones, which had evidently belonged to some animal long since the sole possessor of his expansive home. The light from the bundle of papers was dying out and he made good his escape before darkness closed in upon him.

As he crawled out in the light of day he determined to use the place as a storehouse for all of which he was now the sole owner. His task of carrying the things into the cave was a hard one be-

cause for twenty feet he was compelled to crawl on hands and knees with them.

When at last all had been carefully stored away, Ed had sufficient supplies to last one man at least two months and a prudent one even a longer period of time.

Life in the woods with no other companions than the wild animals soon had its effect on Ed. At times he would see a fox and give chase. The different calls of the beasts and birds of the forest seemed to come to him as a natural gift and often would he amuse himself for hours at a time calling first one specimen and then another of this wild life about him.

To many he would throw a morsel of food, and in this way they soon became his friends. He also absorbed much of the cunning of his wild neighbors as well as their speed and endurance.

As time passed Ed commenced to roam farther and farther from his rocky cave, and not infrequently would he add to his stores by some dashing raid. He would swoop down on some isolated house, help himself and be gone before the inmates could realize that they had had an unwelcome visitor.

The soles of his shoes were worn entirely away, yet Ed still wore the uppers. The sharp stones cut

and bruised his feet, but he never seemed to notice it. In fact the boy seemed oblivious of pain.

As the fall approached, Ed's condition became more desperate. The only suit of clothes he possessed now hung in shreds around him and when he would dash across the road, his half naked figure with its array of rags flying out like streamers behind him was enough to frighten the hearts of the stoutest inhabitants.

After one or two experiences of this kind Ed seemed to take a fiendish delight in scaring women and children. He would creep towards them with the stealth of a panther until within a few feet of them, then with a shrill cry of a wild cat he would spring past them and dart off through the woods.

So great had become the alarm at this that it was nothing unusual to see a party of children on their way to school guarded by a stalwart man with a gun on his shoulder.

On these occasions the "wild man," as Ed had come to be known, was never seen, though he would often watch the group from the top of some distant tree. Finally the tattered clothes gave place to hides of animals. No more fierce or uncouth object could be imagined than such as Ed Hahn now appeared. His hair had grown long and matted while his sole covering was the skin of some animal bound about his loins. The sun and exposure had turned his skin

to a dark brown and this was deepened by the absence of soap and water. A pair of steel-gray eyes, large and piercing, looking out under his heavy brows gave him the fierce expression of a tiger.

The hoot of an owl, or the shrill scream of a wildcat, was enough to terrify the people living on the outskirts of the settlements, for they fully expected at any moment, to have this wild man dash among them.

Party after party was organized to go in search of him; but as often as these would return without having seen him, it was only to be told that he had again been frightening the children who strayed a little too far from home while the men were away.

There was one man who stood in no fear of this apparition, notwithstanding the doubts and speculation of others. He was confident that this creature was Ed Hahn, and he searched diligently for him. This was Sam. All summer he had lived in the mountains trying to catch a glimpse of him but had failed.

Now that the cold weather had set in, Sam returned to the Hahns' to provide himself with heavier clothing and despite the earnest persuasions of the people to remain and rest a while he returned at once to the mountains.

About the middle of October, while seated on the slope of the mountains, Sam saw an object which

puzzled him. He could not decide whether it was man or beast. After watching it at a distance for some time he concluded to investigate.

This object had appeared at least a quarter of a mile away from where Sam sat, but when he arrived at the spot he found no trace of it.

"Well," mused Sam, "whatever it was it heard me coming and has made good its escape." Still Sam remained in that vicinity and in less than a week had his vigilance rewarded; for one day, seated on a huge rock, was the object he had seen before. He approached it as carefully as he could, but was unable to get nearer than several hundred feet before the object heard him and sprang to its feet to disappear in an instant. Sam, however, had recognized in this discolored creature the likeness of Ed Hahn.

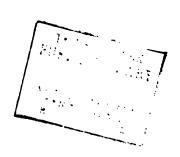
In vain Sam searched for some trace of the boy, but nothing could he find that would indicate where he had gone.

"I guess this is the place for me to stay," Sam reflected. "I've seen him twice around here and maybe the third time I'll have better luck."

And he sat down upon the rock directly above Ed's cave! When night came on, he moved back to the grassy slope and went to sleep. How long he had been asleep he could not tell, when he was awakened by the rustling of leaves near him. The



Bending over him Sam saw the figure of Ed Hahn





moon had risen and was throwing a flood of light into the clearing, making objects stand out in bold relief.

Bending over him Sam saw the figure of Ed Hahn. In his hand he held a long knife, its blade glistening in the rays of the moon.

Sam dared not move, but looking straight into Ed's eyes commanded, "drop that knife." Ed's arm dropped instantly to his side, his fingers relaxed their hold and the weapon fell to the ground.

Sam started to rise, but in doing so his eyes shifted from Ed's face. The spell was broken and Ed sprang upon him. There in that beautiful glade, under the star-lit sky, far away from human intervention, a duel for life was fought.

Over and over the two men rolled in their struggle for supremacy, first one and then the other gaining an advantage. The struggle seemed to be merely a matter of endurance, until they rolled over a rock and fell several feet through the air. The fall did not damage, but succeeded in breaking their hold. Ed was the first to regain his feet, and when Sam got up was nowhere to be seen.

A fainter hearted man would have been glad of the opportunity to make good his escape; but not so with Sam. He would catch Ed Hahn, or die with him.



"I'll pitch my tent right here," he resolved, "untill I capture him."

Sam picked up the knife, which had been intended for his execution, and examined it.

"Wonder where he got this thing," he thought; "he never brought it from the house." Sleep for that night was out of the question, so keeping a sharp lookout to prevent another attack, Sam moved around cautiously.

As morning dawned he circled round the place where he had met with the encounter. In this way he was brought beneath the overhanging rock, where he seated himself with his gun across his knees to partake of a scanty breakfast.

While eating he was watching some clouds that were rolling over the mountains on the opposite side of the Clove and before he had finished a storm broke in all its fury. Sam had never noticed the natural shelter hewn in the rock nor would he have ever found it had not an accident happened.

Ed, finding himself free of Sam's hold, took to his heels and was soon concealed in the woods, where he listened to learn if he were being followed. Satisfied with the silence he lay down and went to sleep. In the morning he wandered down the mountain side until he felt the warning drops of the coming storm. He then turned towards his

cave and with the speed of a deer made for its welcome shelter.

Having forgotten all about Sam, he dashed through the foliage and beneath the rock and would have entered his cave, had not Sam, forgetting his rifle, jumped to his feet. The rifle dropped to the ground and the subsequent report, together with a scream from Ed, told the whole story. The rifle had gone off and Ed Hahn had been shot.

Sam leaned over the fallen boy and tried to ascertain how badly he was injured. Ed clutched at a gaping wound in his thigh and fought Sam when he tried to remove his hand. Sam was now in a fix: his limited knowledge of surgery made it hard enough for him to dress Ed's wound, without having to overpower him every time he came near him. He plainly saw his duty, however, and went to work as best he could.

- "Let me go in there," cried Ed.
- "In where?" Sam asked.
- "Why, in my house; it's dry there."
- "All right," said Sam, and lifting Ed in his arms carried him farther beneath the rocks.

Ed started to crawl, dragging his wounded limb along the ground. Sam tried to make him lie still, but he crawled on until he realized that the lad was disappearing. He then followed, not willing Ed should get beyond his reach for a moment.

Ed never paused, but crawled through the passage and put his hand on a box of matches. The next instant Sam saw a flickering light ahead of him.

"There's room enough for both of us here," Ed remarked.

Sam looked round him. "Well, by gosh!" exclaimed he. "I never knew this place was here. Got another match, Ed? I'll gather some wood and make a fire, if I can find my way out."

Ed struck another match, and Sam went out. When he returned he was dragging behind him a bundle of wood.

A fire was soon kindled, and Sam looked upon Ed's stores. Materials for bandages were soon found among the things and he proceeded, much against Ed's will, to give him what attention he could.

Then he spread some blankets on the floor of the cave, and placing Ed upon them covered him.

"Where did you get all these things, Ed?" he asked.

"They belonged to the men, and when we got chased, we threw them over the rock out there."

"Do the men know of this cave?" Sam inquired.

"Guess not," Ed answered proudly, "I found it myself, after they were gone."

CHAPTER XII.

THE FAIR IN THE CAVE.

SAM took a pine knot and using it for a torch began to explore the cave. He had no fear of leaving Ed now, as he had bound him up in such a way that he could not have walked if he tried.

The light from Sam's torch grew fainter and fainter as he penetrated into the bowels of the earth and suddenly it disappeared altogether.

He had turned a corner and entered a side passage. In what seemed to Ed an eternity there was total darkness, save for the light of the fire beside him, when as suddenly as it had disappeared the light shone forth again, but only for a moment, when Ed saw it fall.

"Guess he's dropped through somewhere," Ed speculated. But he was soon undeceived; for Sam was seen coming out of the darkness.

"Gosh, boy!" exclaimed Sam. "This is a big one. My light was going out, so I had to come back. Don't know how much further this cave goes. Now let me see to that wound."

It was healing nicely. In a week's time Ed was

able to walk, and as Sam had made good friends with him he had no trouble in inducing him to go anywhere with him.

Sam's chief anxiety now was to get Ed home without further mishap. He determined to take him home after dark, so that their appearance in Palenville would not create a sensation. When the time came, Sam followed the path through the woods, keeping always Ed before him. Though the boy was still very lame, Sam was not willing to take any chances with him, therefore he kept him constantly in view and within reach of his hand.

About nine o'clock that night Sam rapped on the kitchen door of Mr. Hahn's house. He then led Ed by the arm and when Susie opened the door, her first glance fell on the boy. Giving vent to a frightful scream, she fled.

Sam entered, and taking Ed directly to his room, called for Mrs. Pierce.

"It's me, Sam," he said. "I've got Ed!

Mrs. Pierce recognizing Sam's voice went to him.

"Now," said he, "I want some one to send word to Mr. Hahn right away."

"It's too late, Sam; there is no one here but Susie and me."

"I can't help it, Mrs. Pierce; that message has got to be sent to-night. If one of you won't take it, I'll go myself and leave you here with Ed."

"Good Lord, Mrs. Pierce," cried Susie, "I would rather walk to New York with Sam's message than stay here with that boy. Have you seen him?"

"No, Susie, I have not; but if you feel that way you can go to the village and send Sam's telegram."

Susie had followed Mrs. Pierce upstairs, when Sam called.

"There's nothing to be afraid of now, since that fellow is caught," said she. "I'd just as soon go as not."

Sam's telegram read:

"Mr. Hahn, come up at once. Have found Ed. SAM."

When Ed found himself confined in a room he became very restless. He would go from one window to another and look out. He did not seem inclined to trust himself to jump, nor indeed would he have been able to had he tried, because Sam kept within reach of him. The first thing in the morning, Sam sent Susie for the village blacksmith and had strong bars put across all the windows of Ed's room; he also took the precaution of having the door strengthened.

When this work was completed, Sam felt more at ease; and for the first time since capturing Ed let him out of his sight with some assurance that he would be there on his return.

Sam was in much need of rest, as he had sat up all of the previous night watching lest Ed might wake and once more get away from him. So when Mr. Hahn arrived, late that afternoon, he was found fast asleep in his room.

Mr. Hahn wanted to go at once to his son.

"You are very foolish to think of such a thing," said Mrs. Pierce. "He may get violent and then there is no telling what might happen."

"Well, wake up Sam then; I want to see my boy."

As soon as Sam heard that Mr. Hahn had arrived he hurried to him and told him the story of Ed's capture.

"He was a sight, sir, when I first saw him. I have dressed him in his own clothes now, though, and he don't look so bad. They're pretty tight for him, sir; he's grown a bit since he got away from us."

Sam opened the door for Mr. Hahn to enter. That gentleman fell back with a look of horror on his face. There stood Ed with nothing on but the animal hide in which Sam had brought him to the house, tugging and straining at the bars of the window.

"Come, Ed," said Sam, "what are you doing there?"

"I want to go home," wailed Ed.

- "You can go home bye and bye. Don't you want to stay here a while with me?"
- "Yes; but you weren't here—you've been to my house."
 - "No, I haven't, Ed; I've been right outside here."
- "All right," said Ed, as he seated himself on the floor, "I'll stay here with you."
 - "Don't you know me, Ed?" said Mr. Hahn.

By way of answer, Ed just shook his head.

- "I'm your father, Ed; you ought to remember me."
- "No, you're not. He's the only father I've got." And Ed pointed to Sam.
- "Don't cross him," Sam cautioned. "He's pretty wild now."
- "I should judge so by his appearance. But come. I want you to tell me all about him. We will go to the library."

Sam turned to Ed and said, "I'll be back in a minute, and don't you go pulling at those windows any more."

Sam told of all his adventures since he had parted with Mr. Hahn at Tannersville; of the many nights he had gone to bed hungry, and of the days at a time when he would not have a dry thread on him.

"Well, Sam," Mr. Hahn said, "you have had

a pretty hard experience, and all for a paltry reward of one thousand dollars."

Sam jumped to his feet. "I didn't do this for any reward, sir. I don't want any of your money. I let the boy slip and I had got to find him, that's all there is about it!"

"No, Sam; that is not all there is about it. You earned the reward and, furthermore, proved yourself worthy; and I would not let you go now, if it took ten thousand dollars to keep you."

Sam's face lighted up with pleasure. "That does me more good than all the money you could give me, sir. You see, I never was much good, and when I couldn't even keep Ed I thought you would think pretty mean of me; but now you are satisfied, and I have him safe, I feel like a new man."

- "By the way, Sam, you said Ed was in a cave up there? I should like to see that cave."
- "All right, sir. I'll take you. There's a lot of things in that cave that's been stolen from the folks around here."
- "Is that so, Sam? You don't suppose Ed stole the things, do you?"
- "No, sir; it was them fellows that was a keeping him. They had to skip and leave pretty much everything; so Ed put it in the cave."
- "Well, we will have to take the townspeople up there to let them identify their belongings."

"Oh, no, sir. There ain't nobody knows where that cave is except me and Ed, and I don't take nobody there but you," said Sam decidedly.

"All right, Sam; but we will have to arrange it somehow."

On the following day Mr. Hahn and Sam went to the cave. When they arrived there Sam looked chagrined."

"By gosh, sir," said he. "I never thought about your having to crawl in here; you will get all dirty."

"It's too late to consider that now, Sam. I must have walked twenty miles to get to this cave, and now a little dirt is not going to turn me back."

"All right, sir," said Sam, as he took the lead and lighting one of the lanterns with which they had provided themselves, held it so that Mr. Hahn could see his way. They crawled along without speaking until on the inside, Mr. Hahn straightened himself up and holding the lantern above his head, exclaimed.

"My, my, Sam; this is a big place!"

"Yes, sir; but you haven't commenced to see it yet—the fact is, I haven't seen it all myself yet."

The two men went on, each holding up his lantern. For one hundred and fifty feet there was no interruption; then came the end of the natural wall.

"This way, sir," said Sam, as he turned to the

left and led the way through a long passage, which entered into another room larger than the first. Here they were confronted by several passages, leading in different directions.

"Let's go to the right," Sam suggested.

"Very well," agreed Mr. Hahn.

For about a hundred feet they traveled this passage, when Sam grabbed Mr. Hahn by the arm.

"Look out, sir," he cried, "there appears to be a hole there."

"That's so," exclaimed Mr. Hahn, side stepping gingerly, I guess we had better be more careful where we walk."

Sam held up the light and looked round. "See," said he, "this thing is more than a hole."

Well might he exclaim. For this cavity, forming an irregular circle, was more than twenty feet in diameter. Sam found a loose piece of rock, which he threw over the edge. Then they listened. For what seemed to be a long time they heard nothing. Then there came a splash, as if the rock had struck a body of water.

"Great Scott," Sam shouted. "This must be the Devil's pool."

"It looks very much like it, from the time it took that stone to get to the bottom," assented Mr. Hahn.

"Well, if it is, I hope I hit him on the head with

that rock. It was big enough to go clean through him, after dropping that far," laughed Sam.

The two men stood for some time contemplating this natural well.

- "I wonder," remarked Mr. Hahn, "if this passage is continued on the other side?"
- "Don't know, sir, but it looks to me as though it might."
- "Well, we can go no further this way. Suppose we try the other passage."
- "All right, sir," and off they went to seek new wonders. The other passage was broader and much longer. Every now and then they would come to a natural arch or doorway in the side wall which would lead into rooms of different sizes varying from fifteen to twenty feet square.
- "This is grand, Sam," exclaimed Mr. Hahn. "As much as I have traveled, I have seen nothing to compare with it anywhere."
- "Yes, sir, it's a pretty big place; that's the reason I didn't want to bring anybody up here."

This passage led them to a body of water, the extent of which they had no means of ascertaining.

"Well, Sam, this beats all the rest. Here is a lake in the solid rock hundreds of feet beneath the roots of those old trees up there."

Sam looked up. "I don't see any roots."

- "No, I suppose not, as there are thousands of tons of dirt and rock between them and us."
- "Well, sir, I will tell you what I was thinking of. As I said before, nobody knows about this here cave, and I was thinking that I might make people pay to go through it."
- "That would be a great scheme Sam, if you owned the land, but as soon as you begin to make money out of it, you would be ordered off the premises."
- "Guess that's right, sir; I never thought of that. I wish you owned this place, Mr. Hahn; then we could both make something out of it."
- "That's not a bad idea, Sam; no one knows the value of this place as yet, and perhaps I could buy it for a song."
- "I hope you can, sir. I am sure it would pay, if we could get it going."
- "Yes, I guess it would; for we are now in the heart of the Catskills."
- Mr. Hahn had no difficulty in finding the owner of the property, but when he offered to buy it, the man thought him crazy.
- "What will you give me for the whole piece on the side of the mountain?" asked he.
- "Name your price," said Mr. Hahn, "and I will tell you if I will accept it."

A bargain was struck and Mr. Hahn received a

deed for all the coveted property. Next he secured a strip of land running down the mountain into the Clove. When all was in readiness, he put men to work enlarging the entrance to the cave.

The blasting started the report that a new quarry had been opened and many were the speculations as to the kind of stone the owner expected to get out of it.

When the entrance had been made five feet wide and seven high, Mr. Hahn sent for an electrician, and went over the plans with him for illuminating the cavern.

Everything was to be ready by the following spring; but it took until the fourth of July before everything was complete for the opening day. "The Heart of the Catskills" had been widely advertised. Mr. Hahn had an electric road constructed, connecting with the Catskills Mountain Road, and running from Palenville to the cave.

Large cannon were placed on the platforms built on either side the cave near the entrance, and as the sun rose that Fourth, the whole valley reechoed with the thunder of the two pieces.

Sam, in a blue suit, was rushing in every direction. Mr. Hahn had made him an equal partner, and to him fell the entire management of their scheme.

The first car over the new road was to leave the Palenville Terminal at nine a. m., but long

before that hour it was crowded: many being eager to buy the first ticket for this new attraction. The tickets were made of aluminum and for the opening day all had been numbered. As a special feature, every ticket was stamped with the seal of the company as the purchaser entered the cave. In this way the tickets were canceled, so that they could not be used again. Then the telephone bell at the cave commenced to ring.

"Hello!" called Sam.

"Hello, there," came the voice from the village.

"Are you ready to handle the first car? They're piling in here thick and fast."

"Yes," was Sam's answer. "We are all ready at this end; send them along. I'll start the thing off with a salute from the old cannon."

Sam gave the signal, and the two cannon belched forth fire and smoke. As the report rolled down the Clove, the current was turned on, and Sam's first business enterprise had begun.

About fifty people had crowded into the first car, and when they reached the cave, the sights there bewildered and amused them.

A large electric sign encircling the entrance read, "WELCOME TO THE HEART OF THE CAT-SKILLS." Along the passageways more lights were festooned, varying in colors to produce a weird effect.

In each of the rooms had been arranged groups of figures of mythical mountain dwellers. In one they were seated round a keg holding their glasses high, as if ready to toast each visitor; in another, they were at their favorite game, ten pins, and there, half way down the alley, lay a ball, the bowler still bending over it in expectation of seeing the pins scatter. Others stood round, ready to applaud what appeared to them a fortunate roll.

Next came the lake, its whole outline sparkling with incandescent light, and on the surface flitted canoes, manned by dwarfs in costumes of bygone days.

Through the other passages leading to the Devil's pool, the lights were covered with blue shades, and across the stony roof sparks of electricity were flying to and fro. The effect produced was very weird and inspiring.

Across the pool an iron bridge had been built, where visitors might stand and look into the depths, several feet below. Mr. Hahn had a huge figure of his Satanic Majesty constructed of aluminum; the head would bend back and the eyes, which had strong lights behind them, would roll in their sockets. His right arm would move in a ball and socket joint: so gracefully were these movements executed that there was no mistaking the cordial invitation to all those to join him in the sepulchral

depths of the infernal region. Every now and then there would be a violent wagging of his tail that lashed the pool into foam and dashed the spray against the rocks.

The figure was painted red and stood on a galvanized float, giving the impression that the devil himself was there walking on the water which frothed and boiled as it liberated the steam forced beneath it.

To make the tableau more effective, lights had been arranged at the bottom of the well in such a way that they could not be seen from above yet cast a mellow light upon the image, the movements of which were controlled by electricity.

Looking down from the bridge, it was almost impossible to believe that it could be other than an actual being, so lifelike did it appear.

Among the first to enter the cave, was Lillian, accompanied by Nina. Notwithstanding the fact that this young lady had been married over a year she was still Miss Nina to Lillian, and the relationship of teacher and pupil still existed, as they had all been living at Mr. Hahn's, and Nina would not consent to have anyone put into her place as governess; neither did she wish to have Lillian sent to boarding school just yet.

When the two entered the cave, Lillian was enraptured with the magnificent effect of the lights

and shadows; but her chief delight came in being paddled round the lake by the dwarfs in their odd canoes. Her laughter would echo through the massive rooms until all within the cave would be cheered by its silvery tones.

"Do you know, Miss Nina," said she, "I would like to hold a fair in one of these rooms, to help along the little church in the village."

"Why, dear," exclaimed Nina, "that is a very good idea, and if Mr. Hahn will allow it, I will assist you."

As soon as Mr. Hahn could be found, his consent was obtained. Then a suitable room was selected, and early next morning mechanics were put to work to change its appearance into a picturesque grotto.

While this was going on, Lillian was busily engaged with a costumer designing a beautiful gypsy queen dress.

"Shall I send up some things from New York, Lillian?" asked Mr. Hahn, entering into the spirit of the fair.

"Oh, no, father; that would never do, because then the people up here couldn't sell their own things."

"Well, well, miss; you're not going to rob Peter to pay Paul, are you?"

"No, I don't want to rob anybody."

One week from the opening day, the grotto was completed and thoroughly stocked with such novelties as could be procured from the home market.

No donations had been asked for and none were received, so Lillian felt that she was the entire mistress of all round her. We are hardly prepared to say that Lillian was a strictly honest merchant. When any of the people she had seen at Mr. Hahn's house and knew to be wealthy would come to her booth, she would double the price, at the same time telling them what a bargain she was giving them, and when a villager with a slim purse stood before her, down dropped her price to the bottom.

Many a youthful admirer lingered round the grotto to watch the beautiful gypsy queen with her golden hair flowing over her spangled robe, selling her wares.

With the men Lillian had no difficulty to make sales, but often her little brain would be perplexed as to how she should handle some of the women who came to buy! On the third afternoon, Lillian stood behind her table, full of glee, the jingle of the coins in her pocket making her heart swell with pride, when she was accosted by an elderly lady, evidently an inhabitant of some nearby village.

"What do you call them things?" the visitor asked.

- "Those?" said Lillian. "They are 'old oaken buckets."
- "What are you asking for them?" was the next query.
 - "A dollar and a half, ma'am," Lillian answered.
- "Land sakes," the old lady exclaimed. "A dollar and a half for them little sticks. I can buy a whole cord of wood for that."
- "Yes, ma'am, maybe you can; but you would burn the wood and then it would not be of any use to you. This is different, you see; you can keep this. Besides, the money goes to the church and I am sure will do good."
- "Maybe it would, Missie; but I am not giving my money for other folks to take to church for me. Land knows, I don't go very often, but when I do, I can carry my own money."

As the old lady moved on, Lillian turned to Nina and said, "I wonder if all people get like that, Miss Nina, when they grow old?"

- "No, dear, that old lady has probably seen very little of this world and she thinks that all things should be measured entirely by bulk and not by sentiment."
- "Well, Miss Nina, I should think that she would go round and see things, then."
 - "When she was young, my dear, she probably

did not have the opportunity; now she is old, she would not enjoy it. You see, she does not appreciate this wonderful cave, with all the pretty lights father has put in it."

Lillian became thoughtful for a moment, then looking up, she said: "Miss Nina, do you know I am sorry for that old lady. I would like to give her one of these buckets. Do you think I might?"

"Yes, Lillian; I think it would be very nice."

Lillian picked out a pretty bucket and started out to find the old lady, who by this time had reached the bridge over the pool. As Lillian approached, the old lady saw her and putting up her hand exclaimed, "No, I don't want none of your tomfoolery, so you needn't be a-follering me around; I wouldn't buy none of your trash."

- "Please, ma'am," Lillian said, "I don't want you to buy anything. I want to give you this bucket to remember the cave by. And then, too, you might think of me once in a while."
- "Oh, you want to give it to me, do you?" said the old lady holding out her hand.
 - "Yes, ma'am. Just a little present from me."
- "Well, I just knowed them things wasn't no good, and neither they be, or you wouldn't be agivin' them away."

Lillian taken completely by surprise, was almost

sorry now that she had given the old lady a present. She returned to the grotto in no very happy state of mind, and sat down to ruminate on the disagreeable side of financing a fair.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OPERATION.

THE next seven years, Lillian confined herself to study, spending most of the time at a boarding-school in Connecticut and later at college. Her summers were devoted to rest among the old familiar hills, and during periods of recreation she would often visit Ed's room. Her presence there produced a peculiarly soothing effect upon him. He would call her his "white angel," and her least wish was promptly complied with by him.

Many hours would Lillian sit and read to him. She would often look up from her book and note on Ed's face the old natural expression of his brighter days. She could see what a handsome fellow he had been and her heart would go out to him in sympathy.

It is highly probable that during one of these sessions of sisterly attendance Lillian's purpose in life was laid out for her, for at seventeen, this young lady took Mr. Hahn into her confidence and

as a result it was decided that she should finish her education abroad.

All her preparations were made and when the morning arrived for her to make her departure, she flung her arms round Mrs. Hahn's neck.

"Mother," she said, "you will not see me again for five long years and when I return I shall be so accomplished that you will hardly know your little girl; but, mother, whatever changes you may see externally, remember my heart will be in the same place it is to-day."

"Yes, my dear child, I have no fear but that you will love me as much then as now, and I sincerely trust that when you return we will never again be called upon to be separated, for I shall miss you dreadfully."

Mr. Hahn saw Lillian safely on board ship, and waited until she was joined by the friends, who were to be her companions on the voyage and who were to conduct her to the American consul in Germany, with whom she was to reside during her five years of study.

Once a week during all those five years of separation, Lillian wrote home to her dear "mother," as she always called Mrs. Hahn, and as the time of her absence was drawing to a close, Mrs. Hahn received the following letter:

"My dearest Mother,

Many wonderful things have happened since last I saw you, and now I must prepare you for the changes which have taken place. You will no longer find in me your demure little girl. I am a full grown lady and have lost my shyness.

Germany is a splendid country and I shall leave behind me many pleasant associations. But oh, mother, I do so long once more to see you all and to roam through the woods of my dear old mountain home. It will not be long now, mother dear, On the first day of June, I set sail for my native land; then it will be only a matter of a few days, when I am once more in your dear arms.

There is another very important thing, which I must tell you. There is a young surgeon here, who is coming to America, who thinks that something can be done for Ed. Do not let your hopes rise too high, but let us all trust in the Lord and pray that this surgeon's skill may bring about the desired results. All arrangements can be made when I return.

Give my love to all our dear ones and keep for yourself an abundant share.

Your loving daughter,

LILLIAN."

Mrs. Hahn read the letter over and over. "My

boy," thought she, "if he could only be restored to us, as he once was, how happy we would all be." As evening approached, she stood by the window waiting for her husband's return, and hardly had he entered the house, when Mrs. Hahn handed him Lillian's letter.

"Read it right away, Tom," she said. "I want you to know the good news our little girl sends us. It seems she is to be a blessing to us, no matter where she is."

Mr. Hahn read the words of encouragement and the tears came to his eyes.

"Bessie!" he agreed, "let us take Lillian's loving and hopeful advice and await the outcome."

The days had never seemed so long as now to the anxious mother. Lillian's words had inspired a confidence in her that could not be shattered. Ed's mind was to be restored to him, of that she felt certain!

June—and that memorable day in June—arrived! The house in the mountains was thoroughly renovated, and it was planned they should all have a long summer there.

Mr. and Mrs. Hahn went to the pier to welcome their returning child and when the big liner was warped into her berth and the gang planks run out, Lillian, with all the nimbleness of girlhood, was one of the first to leave the ship.

Scarcely could Mrs. Hahn believe her eyes as she saw this stately queen descending the plank, for Lillian, more radiantly beautiful than ever, had grown tall, her figure superbly rounded, her complexion of the daintiest tints of the lily and the rose setting off her beautifully chiseled features and, crowning all, a mass of golden hair, on which rested a jaunty traveling cap.

As Mrs. Hahn beheld her, she wondered if ever anyone had been so beautiful before! It did not take her long, however, to realize that here was their own sweet girl again. As she clasped Lillian to her breast, she realized that this pure and loving heart was hers as much as ever before, in spite of the girl's wonderful beauty.

On the following day, the whole party, including Nina, Will and their three little children, took the train for Catskill, where they were received with open arms by Mrs. Pierce, now like one of the family, having been so many years in their service.

"Isn't it just lovely, mother!" cried Lillian, as she sat on the veranda with Mrs. Hahn, looking over the valley of the Hudson.

"I have seen nothing so grand, since I left this dear old place, five years ago," she added. "It is the only thing, mother, that has not changed; it looks the same to-day as it did then."

"Yes, dear, everything has changed except those

old hills and my poor boy's condition. When do you expect the young surgeon you wrote about?"

"The operation will take place in about a week, mother. In the meantime, we must make all arrangements—there is much to be done. Father must go to see Dr. Thorn; we will want him here. Then, too, we will need two trained nurses. Dr. Mumford must also be here; we could not leave the dear old man out, he has always been so interested in the case."

"Do you think, Lillian, that this young surgeon will understand Ed's case?"

"Oh, yes, mother, I think so; but we must not be too sanguine, for then if it proves a failure we would all be so disappointed."

"You do not know a mother's heart, my child. For years I have longed and prayed for this deliverer, and now to think that you should bring him to us."

"I trust, mother, that your faith may be rewarded; but listen, is that not Nina's little girl? She must have fallen and hurt herself."

"That is a way children have," replied Mrs. Hahn. "Some day, dear, you will no doubt have your own little ones to look after."

"I hope so, mother," Lillian answered.

Silence fell upon this pair of noble women. One was thinking of the child upstairs now grown to

manhood, of the trials and cares he had caused her, yet with all this misfortune he was still her son and she loved him dearly. The other's mind was roaming off into the future, trying to picture herself surrounded by the prattle of innocent baby tongues. The scene evidently pleased her, as a happy smile lighted up her face. Throwing her arms round Mrs. Hahn's neck, she exclaimed:

"Mother, I do love you!"

The suddenness of this assault caused Mrs. Hahn to look searchingly into Lillian's eyes.

"Mother," said Lillian, "I was just thinking what a glorious thing it must be to have the love of a little child, your own child, I mean."

"Yes, dear, there is nothing in this world to compare with it, and it is a great pity that there are not more children brought to those who can so well afford to care for them."

As Mrs. Hahn ceased to speak, Nina stepped out on the porch and taking a chair, seated herself on the other side of Mrs. Hahn.

"We were just speaking of children," said Mrs. Hahn, "and we were wondering why those so able to care for them are the last to welcome them into their homes."

"Mother," Nina said, "they may be women, but they are not true mothers. Children and love are to me synonymous and such love is a thing of which I can never get too much. I will care for and protect all the children God sees fit to send me."

"You can always tell the worth of gold by its false or true ring," said Mrs. Hahn, softly. "In the same way, dear Nina, can you judge the nobility of a woman by the sentiment she expresses, and it is, indeed, a great comfort to me, to find you so staunch and true in your views."

"I do not see, mother, how any woman who loves her husband and her home could possibly hold other views."

"I cannot understand this world, my child, nor the people in it, and perhaps it is as well that we cannot. The truth laid bare might be harder to endure than ignorance."

"Well, mother," Lillian observed, "you seem to have a very easy way of bridging over the troubled waters of life. No doubt you enjoy life the more for it. But how many have the philosophical turn of mind to permit them to abide by your teaching?"

"Lillian, my dear, you have spent the greater portion of your life searching for cause and effect. Your life so far has been one of study and investigation; all this has been necessary, not in the way of completing your education, but merely to prepare you, to make you competent to enter the future life of true womanhood that may be opened to you

at any time, now that you have laid aside short frocks."

"You need not think, mother, that I am in any hurry. I have been away from you so long that I do not feel now as if there were a man living for whom I would leave you."

"Would it be necessary, Lillian, for you to leave me? Look at Nina here. We are as close to one another as ever, yet that does not interfere with her love for Will."

"No," said Nina, "and it never can. Will loves you, mother, as much as I do."

"You misunderstand me, mother," said Lillian. "What I meant was, that for the present I want to devote all my attention to you."

"Well, children, we must not sit out here any longer," Mrs. Hahn said. "It is getting too chilly. Besides, it is time that both of you were in bed."

The week soon passed and the morning for the operation arrived. Ed was placed under an anæsthetic; the two doctors as well as the nurses were in attendance. Mr. Hahn was pacing back and forth on the porch, under a highly nervous strain. The mother, eager for the first news, had placed a chair in the hall near the door of Ed's room.

So absorbed was she that she scarcely noticed the door of Lillian's room as it opened and a tall, golden-haired woman stepped out, clad in a long

linen coat reaching to within a few inches of the floor.

"Mother!" said Lillian gently.

Mrs. Hahn looked up but did not seem to comprehend the meaning of Lillian's attire.

"Where are you going, dear?" she asked.

Lillian, raising her hand, pointed towards Ed's room.

"In there, mother," she said, "I am the young surgeon who to-day, with God's help, will perform the operation that I trust will restore Ed to reason."

"You, my child! Do you understand these things?"

"Yes, mother! This case has been my constant study for the last five years. Four years I spent in college, the last I devoted to operating on the poor who were afflicted in the manner of our poor Ed; and there is more than one humble soul who to-day feels grateful to Doctor Lillian Turner Hahn. Now, mother, I must go in. Kiss me and pray for us."

It was with some misgivings that Mrs. Hahn watched Lillian enter the room; then she descended the stairs and joined her husband.

"Tom, did you know that Lillian was going to perform the operation to-day?" she asked.

"Yes, Bessie," replied her husband, "I knew."

"Why did you never tell me, Tom?"

- "Because that was her secret, and I promised to respect it."
- "Tom, do you think her competent to take our boy's life into her hands?"
- "Yes, Bessie; I have followed her career closely. She has operated on a number of cases similar to Ed's and has been remarkably successful."
- "I hope all is well, Tom, but I do not feel as confident as I did. I love the girl dearly but this is such a terrible responsibility."

Mrs. Hahn resumed her seat in the hall, nor did she leave it again during the hour that the closed door separated her from her unconscious son. With her head bent forward and her hands clasped in an attitude of prayer, the devoted mother sat, pouring out her supplications to God for help and courage to be given the young doctor inside the closed door.

When it opened and Dr. Mumford stepped into the hall, Mrs. Hahn raised her eyes to his. One word escaped her lips, yet what a volume of emotion it held! "Doctor?" she pleaded.

"Wonderful, Mrs. Hahn!" he ejaculated. "Simply marvelous! The way that child handles the knife! I have seen some of our best surgeons, but never have I witnessed greater dexterity or skill than to-day."

"Do you think it will be a success, doctor?"

"As an operation, my dear madam, I have no hesitancy in calling it a phenomenal success; but as to results, I am not prepared to say. Our young doctor in there can tell you more than I."

"How soon will she be out?"

"In a few minutes now, madam," Dr. Mumford answered.

The scene in Ed's room was one not soon to be forgotten. There lay the young man upon an operating table, the two venerable physicians standing, one on either side, the nurses in their spotless uniforms at a little distance ready to be called upon, and over him the golden head of the young doctor.

Lillian held the knife, and proceeded to lay back Ed's scalp. Then skillfully she used a trephine and removed a piece of bone. What this young surgeon found beneath that bone will never be known, as she could never be induced to refer to the operation once, during her professional career.

When it was finished and the wound had been properly dressed, Lillian removed her linen coat and carefully washing her hands so as not to leave the slightest trace of the mission just consummated left the room to join Mrs. Hahn.

"Mother," she said, "so far, all is well. Now we must wait until Ed returns to consciousness before we can tell if the full measure of our expecta-

tions is realized. In the meantime, let us go to the porch; I want air."

"But don't you think we ought to stay here, Lillian, to be near him when he comes to?"

"No, mother, I have left word for one of the nurses to notify me as soon as he shows signs of returning consciousness. For the present, we can do nothing. Besides Dr. Thorn is with him."

Lillian lounged easily in a large easy-chair, drinking in the pure air, when a nurse appeared at the door.

"He's coming back, doctor," said she quietly.

Lillian rose instantly and with a very professional air said, "Mother and father, you may come in with me now if you promise not to speak until I give you permission; we must not excite Ed now."

The three stood by the side of the bed as Ed opened his eyes, and slightly turned his head. He looked into Mrs. Hahn's face tenderly.

"Mother," cried he, "where is Will; is he hurt much?"

Lillian nodded her head as a signal for Mrs. Hahn to answer.

"No, Ed, Will is here. Maybe you can see him to-morrow."

"All right, mother. I'm sleepy now; it must be late, isn't it?"

- "No," said Mrs. Hahn, "but you have been a very sick boy and the room is darkened."
- "I would not talk any more, mother," whispered Lillian. "He had better rest now."
- "You are a little tyrant," said Mrs. Hahn as they left the sick-room. "I had hardly seen my boy when you tore me away from him."
- "That is only that you may see him the longer to-morrow," said Lillian kindly.
- "Do you think he is going to recover entirely?" the poor woman pleaded.
- "Yes, he recognized you and his first word was 'Mother'; that is the reason I was glad you were there."
- "Yes, it was 'Mother'," said Mrs. Hahn, as she broke down and wept bitterly. Tears of joy fell like drops of rain in an April shower, only to refresh and leave the heart brighter.

Lillian then carefully packed away all her surgical instruments and nothing could ever induce her to use them again. As soon as she saw Ed was improving she turned the case over to Dr. Mumford.

"Now," she said, "I am myself once more, and let any one call me 'Doctor', if they dare!"

Words were inadequate to express the gratitude which filled the heart of Mrs. Hahn. Oft would she take Lillian in her arms and kissing her say,

"How much we owe to you, my child. You have done more for us than all the world besides."

"No, no, mother," Lillian would answer, "I am just trying to repay you for all you have done for me. I am sure the time will never come when I succeed wholly—but I can, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that I did my best."

On the morning following the operation, Lillian went to see her patient. Ed first looked pleased at having this lovely lady call upon him, but as Lillian commenced asking him questions concerning his condition, he grew puzzled as to just who and what she might be.

- "Will you please tell me what your name is?" he asked.
- "Your mother calls me Lillian and, if you like, you may do the same."
- "Mother evidently knows you better than I do; but if you are satisfied, I'm sure I ought not to complain. Still, I should like to know your last name."
- "That would call forth a long story, Ed, so we will reserve it until you are stronger and we are better acquainted."
- "Well, they say women are curious, but I admit I would rest easier if you would tell me this story now."
 - "No," said Lillian, "you cannot hear it now.

You see, if I told you everything I know at once, I would have no further excuse for coming to see you."

- "Guess you'd better not tell me, then," Ed said. "But say, when are you coming in again—this afternoon?"
- "We will see," she answered. "But you are talking too much, so I must leave you. I'll come again, however,—I promise you."

Ed watched the door as it closed behind her. Then after thinking for a few moments he called the nurse.

- "Nurse," he asked, "who was that lady who was just in here?"
- "She is the surgeon who performed the operation yesterday, sir."
 - "What operation?"
- "Why, on your head, sir. What do you suppose you are all bandaged up for?"
- "If you'd taken a header out of that machine like I did, you wouldn't be asking why I'm tied up, I guess."
- "Well, you must not talk any more; you heard what the doctor said."
- "I didn't hear any doctor say anything," Ed retorted.
- "Yes, you did, that lady is the doctor, I tell you, and she said you must not talk."

If Ed could not talk, he could at least think. It was all a mystery to him; but it was evident that he would get at no solution until they were ready to give it him. Day after day his condition improved, and as Lillian would visit him every morning, he would ask all sorts of questions to detain her.

When a week had passed, he asked her again for her last name.

"My name, Ed, is the same as yours," Lillian answered. "Your mother and father have adopted me. I am, therefore, as you see, your sister."

"When did all this happen? How long have I been laid up?"

"You have been sick a long time. Do you remember the little girl you ran down, the day of your accident?"

A troubled look came over Ed's face. "Yes," said he. "Is she dead?"

"No," laughed Lillian. "She is very much alive, thank you. I am the little girl!"

"You?" he exclaimed. "You don't expect me to believe that, do you? She was a mere child."

"Yes, Ed, so I was then."

Ed looked steadily at her a moment. Then holding out his hand said, "Give me that hand mirror, please."

Lillian complied with his request. Ed studied

his face in the glass for some time; then handing it back to Lillian, he remarked,

"I certainly look a great deal older than I did the last time I looked in that glass."

"Yes, Ed, we are both older. But do you not remember anything since that day?"

"No, Lillian; the last thing I remember was seeing a stone wall, then all grew black. The next thing I remember was seeing my mother's face before me as I opened my eyes. But, when I come to think of it, mother and father both look older than they did when I last saw them."

"Yes, Ed, many years have passed since then, and when Will Harris comes up next Saturday he can tell you all that has happened. You were not well enough to see him when he was here last."

Ed was not loth to claim the sisterly attentions. First he was satisfied with holding Lillian's hand. This, however, was soon followed by a demand for a kiss.

"I am not giving my kisses away now," remonstrated Lillian. "I am putting them up at auction at the next church fair."

"You are, eh? Well, if father isn't bankrupt, I bet I'll have one of them."

"Stop your nonsense," Lillian smilingly commanded. "I came to bring you good news. Dr. Mumford says that you may sit out on the porch

to-morrow, and if you insist upon it I will sit with you."

"Well, you might give a fellow a chance to ask you before you talk of his insisting. What's more, I don't think I will ask you, unless you give me a kiss."

"Then you can have the porch all to yourself; for I do not believe in bribing people."

The day set for Ed Hahn once more to breathe the air of the outer world was the last Sunday in June, and as he reclined in a chair on the porch the whole family gathered round him, including Will and Nina and their little ones.

"Look here, Mrs. Will," said Ed, addressing Nina. "Father and mother have gone into the adopting business, and it appears they have gotten the best of it, so I wouldn't mind trying it myself. Which of these youngsters are you willing to give up?"

"You saucy fellow," said Nina. "Do you think I am tired of my children and want to get rid of them?"

"If I thought they were the kind you'd tire of, I wouldn't want to adopt one of them," said Ed.

"Well, sir, I am afraid you will have to look in other quarters for your children."

"What do you think of that for selfishness,

father?" Ed said. "There she has three and I haven't any, yet she won't divide."

"It would be a pretty hard matter to divide three children equally between you," laughed Mr. Hahn, "so to avoid a quarrel, Nina does well to keep them all to herself."

And it didn't take the children long to love "Uncle Ed" and Nina often found them leaving her for him.

"You seem determined to adopt my children without due process of law or my consent, either, for that matter," she would say.

"Well, Mrs. Will," he would answer, "if you can't furnish amusement for your children at home, you can't blame them for looking for it elsewhere."

"Don't pay any attention to him, Nina," spoke up Mrs. Hahn. "He will tease you all day, if you notice it."

"What's the matter, mother, are you going back on me too?" Ed asked.

"No, my son, your mother will never go back on you, as you say; but you must not tease Nina so."

"All right. Trot out the next one, then. Where is Lillian?"

"You had better not start on her," laughed Mrs. Hahn, "for she is likely to get the best of you."

Thus matters went on with Ed's condition im-

proving so rapidly that a trip to the cave was planned.

"Father," Lillian announced, "this is the thirteenth season for the cave. I wonder if there will be any bad luck attached to it?"

"Nonsense, my child," was his answer, "I am surprised to hear you speak of such things. Superstition is a thing of the middle ages and no intelligent person considers signs and omens now."

"I am not so sure of that, father. In fact, I think very few people are not affected by such traditions."

"You amuse me, Lillian," said Mr. Hahn. "It seems that the time spent in securing you an education has been wasted, considering the doctrines you hold."

"I'm sorry you think me a failure, father, for it is to you I owe everything."

As Lillian spoke, she unconsciously glanced at Ed. Mr. Hahn followed her eyes and in a moment was all penitence.

"You do not owe me anything, child! Without you, there is no telling where I would be to-day, and Ed there owes more to you than life itself."

"Please do not speak of that, father," Lillian interrupted. "We were speaking of the cave. Can't we manage it so that we can have it all to ourselves?"

"Yes, I guess that can be done," he answered.
"We can make an early start and take a special car; the rest we can hold back until we are ready to return. Suppose we fix on a week from next Friday as the day of our excursion?"

"Why, father, that is the thirteenth! You must mean to flaunt your courage in the face of fate. The thirteenth year, the thirteenth day and on a Friday!"

"Never mind, my child. We will convince you this time that there is nothing in such nonsense."

Lillian said no more. The arrangements went on; and when the sun rose on the morning of the thirteenth, she was up with the larks.

A large wagon was drawn up in front of the porch ready to carry them to the cars. It was in regular picnic style, which pleased the Harris children beyond measure. Ed was the last one to climb aboard as the wagon trundled down the road.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RIVAL.

SAM still reigned supreme as manager of the cave and when he heard of the party coming up on the thirteenth he ordered a general overhauling.

"Everything must be in perfect working order when these people arrive," he said to his men. "It wouldn't do, you know, to have anything go wrong while Mr. Hahn is here."

The orders that Sam gave were promptly obeyed, for Sam was now considered a man of much importance. The many hardships of early life together with his desire to please Mr. Hahn had made him a prudent and careful manager. This trait applied to his own finances as well as to those of the company, hence he was able to accumulate a considerable sum of money.

After getting fairly started, he had built himself a cozy cottage, near Mr. Hahn's house, in which he had lived all these years with no other companion than a huge St. Bernard dog. When the signal rang to inform him that the car had started, Sam took his field glass and stepped out on the platform.

"There they come, boys!" he shouted. "Let's give them a salute from the old twins!" The roar of the cannon soon echoed down the Clove, and those aboard the car knew that Sam had seen them. Lillian was the first to leap from the car and make a dash for the entrance of the cave. Her fondness for the place had never waned.

"I'll beat you all to the lake," she cried, as her figure disappeared within the archway.

The rest of the party paused to speak to Sam, and well it was for them that they did, for the next moment a peal of thunder seemed to rend the air, the earth trembled, and they were nearly blown from their feet by a gust of wind from the mouth of the cave. The women screamed and held their fingers to their ears, more afraid of the noise than anything else.

- "My God!" exclaimed Mr. Hahn. "What was that?"
- "The roof—of the—the—cave has fallen in, sir!" stammered Sam.
- "No, it could never fall—some foul fiend has blown it up! And Lillian, my God! she is in there. Quick, Sam, see if you can reach her!"

Sam dashed through the entrance, closely fol-

lowed by Mr. Hahn, Ed and Will. They did not get far, however, for they found the passage blocked by tons of fallen rock. Above they could see the clear sky through a fissure, caused by the explosion, and there through the latter, peering down at them, was the hideous face of the monster who had been guilty of this atrocious act.

He was looking steadily at Mr. Hahn and the contortions of his face were frightful to behold.

"You've escaped me twice," leered he, "the third time I'll get you!"

Sam rushed out to the office to get his gun, but when he searched for the man, he was gone.

Mr. Hahn went to the telephone, the only thing that seemed to have escaped, and sent word for as many men as could be found to come to the cave with all possible speed and bring tools for handling the debris. In the meantime, those who were at hand set to work to remove such pieces of stone as they could manage. Every now and then they would call with all their might, "Lillian! Lillian! Where are you?" But no answer came from that vaulted sepulcher.

"Of what use is money now?" sobbed Mr. Hahn.
"I would give every dollar I have to hold that child in my arms, yet it avails me nothing!"

The women of the party were urging the men

on to make every effort, but the work was slow and they made but little progress.

The morning was well advanced before the men commenced to arrive from the village. Ropes and chains were brought into action; these were fastened around the boulders and by the united exertion of the crowd they were pulled to one side; but even this was slow work, as the chains would slip or the rocks would roll upon them, securely pinning them to the ground. Struggle as they would, night closed in upon them before they could make an opening through this barrier.

No one was willing to leave the scene until some word of Lillian was received; even Nina with her three children refused to go. She put the babes to sleep in the office and took her seat beside Mrs. Hahn, patiently waiting and watching.

At ten o'clock Sam forced his body through a narrow opening, and, taking a lantern, went in search of those who were imprisoned. As he approached the lake, there, seated on its brink, was Lillian. But what a change had come over her! Her hair no longer shone with that golden hue which had been her pride and glory; it had turned a snowy white, and, with the pallor of her face, it made her appear but a ghost of her former self.

Sam approached cautiously, fearing that he might startle her.

"Miss Lillian," said he, "you are not hurt, are you?"

Lillian looked round in an indifferent way.

"No, Sam," she said, "I am not hurt; but if the rest are gone let me die here. I love this lake and never want to see the light of day again."

"The rest are all right, Miss Lillian," said Sam.
"They had not entered the cave and are now waiting for some tidings of you."

"Thank God!" she cried, and her pent up sorrow burst forth in a shower of tears. "Oh, Sam! You can never know the agony I have suffered, buried beneath that pile of rock, and then, when I crawled here, I heard the two cowardly men who manned the canoes fling themselves into the lake. I could not see them, but I could hear their cries of despair as they sank beneath the water."

"Come, Miss Lillian, you know the folks are anxious." As he spoke, Sam took Lillian's arm and assisted her to rise. When they reached the opening, Sam found that the rock had been forced a little further apart, yet it was still difficult for Lillian to pass through.

As her head and shoulders appeared, Ed reached down and catching her under the arms drew her through. As he did so, he leaned forward and kissed her. Just the meaning of this kiss Ed could hardly have told himself. Of one thing he was certain, however, that he loved this beautiful girl.

If Ed had been permitted he would have gone in search of Lillian instead of Sam, but being unfamiliar with the cave Mr. Hahn would not hear of such a thing.

No one spoke of Lillian's changed appearance, lest it might increase the shock by which her nerves were already shattered. As Mrs. Hahn embraced her she said:

- "My darling child! How you must have suffered."
 - "I did, mother."
- "Never mind, dear, you will be all right in a few days."
- "I don't know, mother; I feel now as though I could never shake the horror of this day and night from me."
- "There is nothing to fear now," Ed said, "though we will have to stay here to-night, for it is too late to get a conveyance from the village. You must lie down and go to sleep and I will sit beside you and watch over you."
- "No, no, Ed," Lillian objected, "you need your rest as much as any of us. I will be all right with mother and Nina."
 - "Just as you like."

Beds were improvised for the women; the men

had to shift for themselves as best they could. As the night wore on and all were apparently asleep, Ed stole carefully to the blankets where Lillian lay, seated himself on the office floor, took her hand in his and tenderly caressed it.

Every now and then Lillian would start in her sleep and at times cry out as if in fear. Then Ed would hold her hand firmly in one of his and with the other smooth back her white hair, much as a mother would fondle a sick child.

Thus the night wore on, and when Lillian opened her eyes in the early morning it was just in time to observe Ed crawling away. Folding her hands one over the other, she determined to watch him. Ed did not go far, but stretching himself out he endeavored to give the impression that he had been lying there all night.

All at once it dawned upon Lillian that one of her hands was exceedingly warm, while the other one was cool. At first she could not understand the meaning of this. Surely, she could not have fever on one side and not on the other; then, too, her warm hand was moist. "He has been holding my hand while I was asleep," thought she. Lillian yawned and stretching out her arms made preparations to rise. At the first sound Ed turned his head to look at her.

- "How do you feel this morning, Lillian?" he asked.
- "Much better; but I'm afraid you have not slept well, Ed, you look very tired."
- "Oh, I did all right; don't bother about me." This conversation was carried on in a low tone, not much above a whisper, so as not to disturb the other sleepers.
 - "Wouldn't you like to take a walk?"
- "Yes, Ed, I would. The fresh air will do me good."

Quietly the two left the office and as the morning breezes gently ruffled Lillian's disheveled hair, she realized for the first time what a change had come over her. Reaching her hand to her head she drew her hair forward.

- "Look, Ed," she cried, "my hair has turned white!"
- "Yes, Lillian; it is as pure as the heart that beats beneath your noble breast."
- "Oh, Ed, I thought my hair was the prettiest thing about me."
- "Lillian, you have given up your crown of gold for one of shining silver whose spotless white is symbolical of your pure character."
- "Ed, you speak so prettily of my misfortune, you almost make me content with the change!"
 - "I hope you will be contented, Lillian. For to

me there seems to be no room for improvement now."

- "Why are you so fond of white hair, Ed?"
- "Apart from the purity it typifies, I think it very becoming, especially when there is a pair of rosy cheeks beneath it."
- "Would you admire me if I should lose the color of my cheeks?"
- "Yes, Lillian, I admire you so much that I don't think shades or tints could enhance nor detract from your value in the least."
 - "Let us go back to the office," Lillian suggested.
- "What for?" questioned Ed. "The folks will not be up yet and I am sure you haven't had enough of this fresh air."
- "No, I do not think I could get enough of that; it is meat and drink to me."
- "A very unsubstantial living, I should say. It's all right in its way, but when you commence to serve it in the line of meals, I want to change my boarding house."
- "You good-for-nothing fellow, you!" said Lillian. "You haven't a bit of sentiment in you."
- "I don't know about that. If you could guess what was passing through my mind just then, you might consider me in a different light. Suppose we sit down here and watch the sun rise; it is just coming up over the hills yonder."

"All right," Lillian agreed. "We can see the cave from here, so we will know when the rest of them are astir."

Lillian sat down facing the East, and Ed threw himself on the ground facing her.

"Do you expect the sun to rise in the West?" Lillian asked.

"No, I am going to watch for it in your eyes," he responded.

"You will not see it there," Lillian said, "for if you look at me so I shall close the lids."

"Tell me, Lillian, how was I looking at you?"

"Don't be foolish, Ed! Look at the sun, it is beautiful now."

"I'll tell you what, I'll agree not to look at you, if you'll sing for me."

"What do you want me to sing?"

"Oh, one of those songs you like. I care for them all."

As Lillian began to sing in a low voice Ed drew a little nearer, and it was evident what a soothing effect her voice had on him: his eyelids closed, then his head dropped forward—he had gone to sleep.

Lillian gently laid his head in her lap and taking the shawl she had round her shoulders spread it over him. "Poor fellow," she thought; "he is worn out."

This was the picture Mr. Hahn saw, when he walked towards the office to see how the women folks were. "Well, I declare!" he exclaimed. "Bessie, come here for a minute; I want to show you something."

Mrs. Hahn obeyed and as she looked upon the couple resting on the side of the hill, she remarked,

- "Tom, wouldn't it please you, if Ed and Lillian became fond of each other?"
- "Why, Bessie, they are fond of each other now; I don't think they could be more congenial if ties of blood relationship bound them together."
- "The ties to which I referred, Tom, were ministerial ties."
- "Come, come, Bessie; this is too early in the morning to start out matchmaking."
- "Maybe you are right, Tom; but it seems to me that they started out before I did."

As Mrs. Hahn ceased speaking, she saw Lillian wave her handkerchief. The motion evidently disturbed Ed, for he opened his eyes.

- "By jove, Lillian! I believe I've been asleep," he cried.
- "I guess you have," she smiled. "It looks very much like it to me. You were worn out sitting up last night."
 - "Who said I sat up last night?"

"My right hand. It was as warm as toast when I awoke." She looked at him and smiled.

That young man realized that he had been found out.

"I don't suppose you would have let me hold your hand so long if you had been awake, would you?"

"You didn't ask my permission," she playfully scolded.

"That's so." As he spoke Ed made a quick move to secure her hand, but he was not prompt enough; Lillian snatched her hands away and had them beyond reach behind her back.

"Look out, we are being watched; you must behave yourself. Ed!"

Ed glanced towards the cave and saw his parents standing there. He waved his hand, then, getting up, assisted Lillian to rise. The two started to join the rest.

Carriages had been telephoned for and preparations were made to leave the ruined cave. Never more would the glories of the subterranean lake be viewed; for during the night more loosened rocks had fallen and now the entrance was effectually blocked and any effort to clear it away would be undertaken only with great danger and expense; so Mr. Hahn and Sam abandoned the idea and the cave forever.

After a night spent in the stuffy office, every-

thing in the house seemed to take on an additional luster, and it was with good will and a sharp appetite that they gathered round the table to partake of a steaming dinner.

"I wonder," remarked Will, "who that fellow was that blew up the cave and then expressed so much regret that we were not all killed?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Will," said Mr. Hahn.

"As far as I know I haven't an enemy in the world.

That man must have some imaginary grievance to drive him to such extremities."

"Do you think we are safe here, father," Lillian asked, "with such a fiend at our very door?"

"Yes, I guess we are as safe here as anywhere. The chances are that he will be frightened away by his failure and will bother us no more," was Mr. Hahn's answer.

Notwithstanding these confident assertions, it was a long time before Mr. Hahn could walk abroad without a feeling of dread lest he should be slain in some deserted spot. He realized that he was the object of some unknown man's hate.

As for Ed, he had youth and a buoyant disposition, and soon forgot that they were menaced by an unknown foe. He did not forget, however, that Lillian was partial to the mountain air and being an early riser himself, he would often join her in a morning ramble through the woods.

Though Ed had the advantage of living in the same house with Lillian, he soon realized that he would have to be on his mettle, for he was no longer alone in the field of admirers: a new arrival, and a close neighbor at that, a man who had taken a house among the trees which stood close to their own beautiful estate was inclined to trespass on their ground, and also seemed anxious to establish himself in Lillian's affections.

If Ed was not constantly at Lillian's side, this neighbor, a man of fifty, and a gentleman of leisure, would be paying court to her.

- "Darn that man," he muttered this August morning as he saw him strolling off under the trees with Lillian. "Why doesn't he mind his own business and stay at home?"
- "Were you speaking my son," asked his mother, who had just left her room and now stood behind him.
- "Yes, Mother, I was saying that that fellow, Vopel, had better keep away from here; he never gives Lillian a moment's peace. As soon as she shows her face he comes running over to our house."
- "What is the matter, Ed? Are you jealous? If you are fond of Lillian, why don't you tell her so and try to win her?"
 - "Hang it all, mother! It's easy enough to think,

but when it comes to telling her about it, my tongue gets balky."

- "Nonsense, my boy; a big fellow like you afraid to speak his mind to a girl!"
- "Do you think it's that?—that I am afraid?" Ed demanded. "I'll show you." And he started to leave the porch.
- "Where are you going?" Mrs. Hahn called out in alarm.
- "I'm going to tell that fellow to keep off the grass and stay away from here!"
- "You mean that you are going to humiliate Lillian and make her detest you, is that it?" she asked.

Ed stopped suddenly. "I never thought of that side of it," he said ruefully, "but I know that my fist will act before my head some day, and then that fellow will get into trouble," he finished loudly.

Blissfully unconscious of the threats being made against him, John Vopel was making himself very agreeable to Lillian.

- "You remind me, Miss Hahn, of the colonial dames," said he, "mothers of our country."
- "Your simile is not very flattering, Mr. Vopel; you are putting me several hundred years behind the times," she said with an amused smile.
- "You are pleased to misunderstand me, my dear young lady. When I used the term 'Colonial dame,' I implied the quintessence of perfection."

- "I am afraid, sir, that you are only trying to smooth over an ungallant reference to my white hair," she insisted wilfully.
- "Indeed, Miss Hahn, if I had not before been a worshiper at your shrine, I am sure those beautiful white locks would now draw me as a slave to your feet."
- "That would be unfortunate, sir! A slave, to my mind, is a base, ignoble creature."
- "And so would I be, Miss Hahn, in comparison with your noble self."
- "Then we will not compare ourselves. Let us rather turn our attention to those beautiful trees. Can you tell me what species that one is?"
- "Yes, that is a sugar maple. Don't you see that can? It is so placed that it catches the sap as it drips from an incision in the bark."
 - "I wonder if there is anything in the can?"
- "Most likely there is. If you say so, we will go and see."
- "Come on," said Lillian as she darted forward.
 "I am going to have the first look." And it is probable that she would, had not a gruff voice bade her halt.
- "We were going to look in the can, sir, to see if there was anything in it," Lillian explained.
 - "Yes, I suppose so," said the owner of the voice,

grimly. "That's where all my sap's been going, I reckon!"

- "You didn't think we were going to steal it, did you?" she demanded indignantly.
- "I ain't thinking nothing about it. You just keep away from it, that's all. Then I'll know you anyway ain't stole it."
- "Come on, Miss Lillian," said Vopel, quietly. "I wouldn't argue with the man if I were you."
- "No," was the response, "and if I were a man like you I would not stand here and be insulted by him either. I'd slap his face for him!"

For the moment, Lillian could not decide which of the men was the more deserving of her contempt; but inasmuch as she had to return with Mr. Vopel, she concluded that the owner of the can was the meanest man she had ever seen.

On the way home Lillian did not have much to say. She was still too indignant over the manner in which she had been treated to make herself agreeable, and therefore she thought it better to remain silent.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE HALF MILE.

RARE, indeed, are the instances where saloons or liquor stores have been of any material value to any other than the proprietor. Yet we are forced to record one occasion where they saved a man from spending a long time behind prison bars.

Jim Lambert's den had been raided by the police, but it so happened that on that particular night Jim had stopped in a saloon, where word was brought to him that his companions had all been captured, and he was advised to lie low. Like most men of his class he had acquired a daring that bordered closely on impudence. He assumed a disguise and was present at the trial of his comrades, and when sentence was pronounced, mentally bade them good-bye and started out of the court-room resolved to make no new alliances.

For some time he followed the career of a professional cracksman with much success and by keeping busy all the time had but little opportunity to

spend his ill-gotten money nor did he realize how much he had until he decided to take a vacation. Then it was that he gathered together his spoils and found that he would not be compelled to work for a long time if he did not choose.

It is an old adage that associates the Devil "with idle hands." True, we must admit that Jim Lambert's hands were allied to the Devil at all times, but had he continued his nefarious craft, he would not have had time to nurse his hatred for Mr. Hahn.

A visit to his old field of operations convinced him that the time had arrived for vengeance. The cave was revealed to him during his search for the abandoned plunder, and when he was informed that it was conducted by Mr. Hahn and Sam, he concluded that sooner or later he would trap his enemy within its stony walls.

After thoroughly inspecting the cave, within and without, Jim Lambert decided upon his plan of action. Procuring drills and other necessary tools, he would go each night to a spot over the middle of the passageway leading to the cave. Hour after hour would he work with his drills, yet so strong had become his desire to accomplish his villainous design, that he would not cease from his labors until the gray of dawn warned him that it would be unsafe to remain longer.

Night after night he labored in this way, until

he concluded that the holes he had been drilling were deep enough. The next move was then to prepare his dynamite cartridges. After which he secured an electric battery with which to explode the cartridges.

When the mine was ready to be sprung, Jim Lambert sat like a restless watch-dog, waiting for its victim. Day after day rolled by, but he never saw Mr. Hahn enter the cave. Nothing daunted, he still clung to his fond design.

As Mr. Hahn and his family alighted from the car on the morning of the thirteenth of July, Jim Lambert flew to his battery and placed his finger on the key. "Three minutes, just three minutes," he chuckled, "and I will blow that fellow off the face of the earth!"

Holding his watch in his hand, he carefully noted each second as the hand moved round. "Two minutes!" cried he. "A minute and a half! Only one minute now! Thirty seconds! There you go, and with you my curses, on you and all your tribe! This will square us." As he spoke, he pressed the key, and at the same instant the explosion tore the rocks asunder. Jim Lambert paused but a breath, then rushing forward he glared down on the upturned faces of Mr. Hahn and his party.

"Damn my luck!" he muttered, "I fired too soon." And with his parting threat to Mr. Hahn,

he fled, knowing well that he would be pursued. In this way he had succeeded in getting beyond the range of Sam's rifle and disappeared from view.

Let us return to love's battleground, the scene of Ed's struggle for supremacy in Lillian's affections. The truth must be known and the sooner he learned his fate, the better would he be satisfied. After the conversation with his mother, he lay down on the lawn and taking his pipe from his pocket, he carefully filled it and after lighting it, whiled away his time watching the smoke curl above his head and meditating on his future movements. While thus occupied, Sam approached. "Ed," said he, "what do you think of this new fellow—Vopel, I mean; he seems to be mighty forward?"

"If he isn't careful, he'll get something that will make him a little backward," Ed declared fiercely. "He hasn't been up here more than a couple of weeks, yet he seems to think he owns Lillian."

"I wouldn't have any row with him, Ed. It would be better not to let him know you care. You see, I don't like him any better than you do. I've watched him a couple times when he didn't know it, and there is something about his face I don't like."

- "Is that so, Sam? I'm glad you tell me this. You can help me a lot, if you will."
- "Sure, I will," Sam answered. "If there is anything I can do for you, just let me know."
- "Well, you see, Sam, I've been in love with Lillian all the time, but somehow I didn't seem to find it out until this fellow stuck his nose in. Now I've made up my mind to tell her, but he doesn't give me an opportunity. Then, too, she seems changed."
- "You've found out what I knew a long time ago, boy. But you've been wasting too much time. You're not the only fellow who has held a bird careless-like in his hand because he felt sure he had it."
 - "What would you advise me to do, Sam?"
- "Well, in the first place I'd treat that fellow civilly. Then in the next place I'd stick so close to Lillian that I wouldn't give him a chance to talk to her alone; he can't do much harm then, you know."
- "That's all right; but what I want to do is to get something against him, so we can turn him off the premises."
- "You leave that to me," said Sam. "Since the cave's gone, I've got nothing to do but watch him, and if he ain't all right, I'll find it out."
 - "Sh," Ed cautioned. "Here they come now,

and deucedly handsome she looks, too. I wonder what he's been saying to her?"

- "Good morning, Mr. Vopel," said Sam. "Fine morning for a walk, this."
- "Yes, Sam; especially if your companion is brighter than the morning," replied Vopel.
- "Well, I guess you're right, sir; for there's none of them around here as can touch Miss Lillian," said Sam.
- "I think you can talk that over better in my absence," Lillian observed, as she waved them adieu with her handkerchief and skipped off towards the house.

The three men watched her until she entered the door.

- "A deuced fine girl, that!" reiterated Vopel, as he drew a cigar case from his pocket. "Will you join me, gentlemen?"
 - "No," said Ed. "I prefer my pipe."

Sam, on the contrary, accepted a cigar. He was well pleased at the opportunity of working his way into Vopel's good graces. He could watch him at a closer range.

- "Pretty good cigars, these," said Sam. "Suppose you get them from New York?"
- "Yes, these are a special brand of mine. Glad you like them. You must come over to the house

some evening and we can have a chat and a smoke at the same time."

- "Thank you, sir. Going to leave us?"
- "Yes," answered Vopel, "I have some little matters to attend to this morning, and Miss Hahn has done me the honor to promise me her company for a drive this afternoon. Good day. Good day, Mr. Hahn."
- "Good morning," said Ed, without taking his eyes from the bowl of his pipe.
- "Ed," remarked Sam when they were alone, "you are making a mistake. If you don't follow the first part of my advice, how do you expect to follow the second?"
- "It's all easy enough for you to talk, Sam. But when it comes to following a fellow's advice, it's a different matter."
- "Well, it is for your own good, Ed, that I'm giving it to you. That fellow is no fool. If he finds out why you don't like him, it will only make him the more determined."

Ed's mind was further disturbed, when immediately after dinner a handsome rig pulled up at the door and Mr. Vopel called for Lillian. Away the pair flew over the stony roads. The horse, a spirited animal, seemed glad of the opportunity of showing his speed.

"Your friend, Ed Hahn, does not seem in a

very pleasant frame of mind to-day," Vopel observed.

"No," assented Lillian, "I suppose something has gone wrong. He is usually so light-hearted, it seems strange to see his face clouded."

"For my part, Miss Hahn, I am glad to have my back towards him, with a good distance between us. Such natures are not to my liking."

"You must not say anything against Ed, Mr. Vopel; he is a fine fellow."

"If you wish it, we will not mention his name again. I am sure nothing would please me more."

"You do not like Ed, Mr. Vopel. Will you tell me why?"

"If you will permit me, my dear Miss Lillian, it is because he shows you so much attention. I admit his right to do so, inasmuch as he has known you so long and you have been so intimately associated; yet it does not please me, just the same."

"How foolish you are, Mr. Vopel: I have almost a mind to be cross with you. Ed and I are the best of friends and I am sure no one would regret it more than I, if anything should happen to make us otherwise."

"You speak as though nothing could compensate you for the loss of his esteem, Miss Lillian."

The carriage was jolting over the stones; it had ceased to be a ride of pleasure but more a ride of

endurance. It was with an effort that Lillian managed to keep her seat.

"Don't you think we had better pay more attention to the road and less to Ed's likes and dislikes," she remarked at last. "I came very near being thrown out just then."

"Yes," he said, "the roads are pretty-bad. You had better hold on to me, Miss Lillian."

Thrice had the man addressed Lillian by her Christian name, and on this occasion she glanced quickly at his face. His eyes were directed towards the road ahead and his entire attention seemed to be taken up with the management of the horse. For a moment she watched him, nor could she tell why there seemed to be a strange fascination about him that drew her towards him mysteriously. He turned his head and as he caught her expression a smile lighted his face.

- "You do not seem to think it necessary to hold on to me," he said whimsically.
- "Oh, no!" was the reply. "I shall get along very well."
- "I was hoping you might come to a different conclusion. It would be a great pleasure to have you leaning on me for protection."
 - "Where do you intend going, Mr. Vopel?"
 - "Straight ahead, Miss Lillian, nor will I turn

until you insist upon it. I should not regret it, if we did not turn at all."

"Why, what do you mean?" Lillian questioned, becoming a little more alarmed at the turn the conversation was taking.

"What do I mean?" echoed Vopel, in an easy, yet firm manner. "I mean that your company is very agreeable to me and if by any chance we should lose our way, I, my dear Miss Lillian, would be the winner by the loss."

"If you think there is any danger of that," she replied all in a tremor, "I can relieve your mind; for I can guide a horse on any road within twenty miles of my home."

A strange light shone in John Vopel's eyes.

"If I only dared," he muttered. "If we could not get back before morning, then I should have her in my power. But how to manage it without arousing her suspicion, that's the question."

For some time they drove in silence, Lillian striving to admire the scenery, and forget her sudden alarm.

"She is beautiful," thought Vopel, looking at her with open admiration, "and I might learn to love her; though I am not a man to fall in love and marry. What would I do with a wife?" he laughed sinisterly. "I suppose they are all right for some men, but for me—never!"

His reverie was interrupted by Lillian calling his attention to a picturesque cove, in the centre of which stood an old log cabin, which had evidently been built by one of the early settlers.

"Do you see that old cabin, Mr. Vopel?" she asked. "It is just fifteen miles from our house. Your horse is, indeed, a fast animal to have covered the distance so quickly. Yet there is a limit to his endurance, and I think we should turn back."

"Just as you say, Miss Lillian." As he spoke Vopel reached for the whip, knowing full well the horse would not endure the slightest touch of it.

Scarcely had his hand touched it than the horse sprang forward and was soon going at a mad gallop down the road. Vopel fumbled the reins as though he was excited or nervous. Lillian did not scream, but holding fast to the carriage she beseeched Vopel to check the wild, dashing animal.

He appeared to be doing his best, yet every now and then he would slap the lines across the horse's back, which maddened it the more. On they dashed over the stony road, farther and farther from home. Still Vopel seemed powerless to control the horse.

For just a moment he took his eyes from the road ahead to look at Lillian and see how she was taking this adventure. That one look was fatal to his plans. A large rock loomed up at the side of the road. He

did not see it nor realize the danger until there was a crash.

The snapping of the bolts of the carriage threw the occupants into the air and the next moment, Lillian saw Vopel disappearing over the dashboard. The bed of the carriage had parted from the four wheels and away went Mr. Vopel, still clinging to the reins and occupying a very uncomfortable seat astride the bar which connected the axles. His struggles were no longer a subterfuge; he was putting every effort into tugging and pulling at the reins to bring the horse to a standstill.

'A half mile down the road, the horse halted and he painfully got himself out of his uncomfortable position.

Bruised and sore he started to lead the horse back to the place where he had so unexpectedly parted with Lillian.

It would be hard to describe the state of John Vopel's mind as he retraced that half-mile so ignominiously traveled but the moment before. His aim of placing Lillian in an embarrassing position had been attained, but at what cost! His carriage wrecked and he in tatters; a pitiable sight in the eyes of a woman he wished to impress.

"She will pay well for this in the end," he muttered. "I wonder how she will feel, being separated from her folks over night and in the company of me. I'd give five hundred dollars to see that Ed Hahn's face when he realizes that the idol of his heart is housed for a night with another man. He wouldn't smoke with me this morning, but I guess he would give anything to see me smoke to-night, that is, if the fire was hot enough to consume me, and here comes the dear girl to look me up! Guess she didn't get hurt, judging from the gait she is traveling. Curse her! She seems to think it a joke to see me all ripped to pieces. Never mind, miss, when you find you have to camp out to-night, you won't laugh so much."

"An unfortunate affair, my dear Miss Lillian," he said, when she was within earshot, "yet there is one redeeming feature to it: you do not seem to have suffered any injury."

"Oh, Mr. Vopel, you will have to pardon me for laughing so, but if you could have seen the figure you cut coming up the road. I never saw anything so funny in all my life!"

"I am sure, Miss Lillian, I am delighted to be able to afford you any amusement, even in this humble way."

"Forgive me, Mr. Vopel, it is bad enough, I admit; but then it might have been worse. The stone which caused our misfortune marked the entrance to a driveway leading to a house not a hundred feet away, and a young man has gone to hitch

up a horse and will drive us over to the railway station, about three miles away. We will still get home, earlier than we expected."

John Vopel stood in the middle of the road, clinging to the bridle of his horse, a stare of blank amazement and chagrin on his face.

- "Damn the railroads!" he fumed. Then glancing at Lillian, he hastened to apologise. "I beg your pardon, Miss Lillian. I was thinking they would not let me take my horse and that derelict of a carriage on the train."
- "You can leave your horse here, sir," vouchsafed a boy, coming forward, leading a poor bony creature which looked as though it had earned many a meal without being paid.
- "I don't think I should care to leave a horse of mine here very long, if that is a specimen of the way you care for your animals," Vopel remarked crossly.
- "Oh, he will be treated all right, sir," said the boy. "I will look after him myself."
- "Come, Mr. Vopel," urged Lillian. "We must hurry or we may miss the train. Then we would be in a fix; for I am sure that you could not get a horse round here that could cover that distance home before midnight—or more like by to-morrow morning."

"Come on, my lad," said Vopel. "Let me see where you are going to put my horse."

The boy started off, followed by Mr. Vopel, the horse and the four wheels. When they arrived at the barn Vopel caught the boy by the arm.

- "See here, son," he said. "How far is it to the depot?"
 - "About three miles, sir."
- "How long do you calculate it will take that crab of yours out there to make the run?"
 - "We always allow half an hour, sir."
 - "And what time did you say the train left?"
 - "At five thirty, sir, but we can make it."
- "You fool!" thundered Vopel. "I don't want to make it!"
- "Then what did you have me hitch up for? The lady said she wanted to catch that train."
- "Maybe, she does; but our minds are not of one accord. See here, kid. It's a dollar if we catch the train; it's five if we don't. And you drive, do you understand?"
- "Yes, sir, I reckon I do; and you can trust me to make that five spot."

Once or twice Lillian's voice had been heard from the road, but calling seemed to produce no results; so she determined to go in person and hurry Vopel and the boy along. Just as she put in an appearance the bargain had been concluded and there was

a great show made of being in haste. When at last they were seated in the old dilapidated carriage, Lillian told the boy to make haste, as they only had twenty minutes.

"Oh, that's all right, miss," he said. "We'll be in time; we always have time to spare."

On they jogged, more like a snail than anything else that Lillian could think of; but even there was a chance, slim as it was, of getting there on time, when the boy thought he heard a loose bolt rattling and pulling up the horse jumped out to investigate.

"Good thing I looked, mister, or you might 'a had another spill, so you might," said he.

Looking in the bottom of the carriage, he found an old wrench, with which he immediately disappeared between the wheels. Here he commenced to tug and pull, first on one nut, then on another, consuming as much time as he dared. With a broad grin of satisfaction overspreading his face, he listened to Lillian's pleadings and Vopel's threats.

- "If you don't come," cried Lillian. "I will take the reins and drive myself. You will make us miss the train."
- "Yes, if you haven't done it already," said Vopel.
 "How far is it from here?"
 - "About two miles, sir," answered the boy.
 - "Two miles!" echoed Vopel. "We can never

make it in the world with that plug. We may as well turn back."

"Oh, no," Lillian cried. "We must make that train! What in the name of Heaven would I do? Hurry, boy; drive faster. Make him run. Anything; only get us there in time! We must make that train."

Every little while Vopel would look at his watch and shake his head. "We can't do it," he would say, "and we might as well turn back first as last."

"Shall I turn back, sir?" asked the boy.

"No, go on as fast as you can!" commanded Lillian. "You must make it, do you hear? you must!"

Poor Lillian! Her last command was fairly screamed into the boy's ear. She had commenced to realize her position and becoming thoroughly frightened, first pleaded, then demanded, that the boy should call for further efforts from the horse, which seemed to be leisurely jogging along.

"We have only four minutes, Miss Lillian," said Vopel, "and over a mile to go. You can see for yourself how useless it is to proceed."

For answer Lillian scrambled over the back of the seat and took her position beside the boy. With one hand she snatched the reins, with the other she reached for the whip, nor did she spare it in the least. The boy at first taken by surprise, soon be-

gan to protest. He would not have his horse beaten that way. "Mind, if you kill him, you've got to pay for him," he expostulated.

To all of which Lillian turned a deaf ear. Her eyes fixed steadily before her and her mind bent upon one object, she urged the horse on, while Vopel, watch in hand, sat on the rear seat. The twinkle in his eye, the expression of his face, told with what satisfaction he was watching this struggle to save the name of a pure girl from the gossip of villagers. He could see the mother of this one throw up her hands in horror, or old aunty that one, say, "I told you so! What else could you expect?" In the centre of this imaginary picture he beheld the Hahn mansion and those within covered with shame and ignominy. Yet an occasional word to Lillian led her to believe that he shared her anxiety.

Had she turned her head quickly she would have seen his true character plainly written on his face, and would no doubt have saved herself many a pang and heartache in the time to come.

Vopel closed his watch with a satisfied snap. "Miss Lillian," he said, "we have run a noble race and fought a brave fight, but we have lost. Our train is just pulling out from the station and we are too far away even to see it."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A MAN STOOD IN HER PLACE."

As Vopel finished his last remark, Lillian's hands dropped in her lap and her head fell forward, and for a moment it looked as though she was going to faint. The boy took the reins from her hands and was about to turn round.

"Don't turn!" begged Lillian, now completely crushed, "I can at least send them a telegram from the station."

"A very wise suggestion," remarked Vopel. Then to himself, "They will begin to worry sooner than I expected." Happiness seemed to be within his grasp; he had gotten Lillian under the ban of disrepute and felt he would now have her in his power. To dissemble was to him a second nature, so leaning forward he placed a hand on Lillian's shoulder.

"This is a very unfortunate affair," he said, "and you cannot know how it grieves me to see you worry so. If there were only something I could do or

say to comfort you. You see, Miss Lillian, I realize, as well as you do, what a false position this accident will place you in; those country people will gossip, you know."

"What do you suppose I care for the country people, Mr. Vopel?" she replied. "It is mother and father I am thinking about. They will worry until they see me safe at home again."

"Yes, I suppose they will, especially as I am a comparative stranger; yet, if they only knew, you are as safe in my hands as in the arms of your mother."

"As for myself," continued Lillian, "I am perfectly able to take care of myself; I have seen enough of the world to know how to care for myself."

"You speak like the noble woman that you are, Miss Lillian; and I assure you that you inspire me with your greatness and I feel like putting myself under your protecting care," he said with a laugh.

"That is an ill-timed joke, Mr. Vopel, I assure you, I am not in a humorous mood."

Being of an entirely unselfish nature Lillian forgot all anxiety of self by the thought of those she loved so well worrying about her. As the carriage came to a stop before the station, she jumped out and entered the waiting-room. Vopel put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a roll of bills, selecting

a five-dollar note from the roll which he handed to the boy.

"You've earned your money, lad," said he, "and now I want you to get out of here as fast as you can. It will take some of the starch out of her to have to walk back."

The boy took one look at the bill, then tucked it away in his pocket, whipped up the horse and was soon out of sight. Vopel watched him until he disappeared in a cloud of dust at a bend in the road, then turning he entered the station, only to be met by Lillian, her face rendered superbly beautiful by her happiness.

"Oh, Mr. Vopel!" she cried, "the train is late and has not yet arrived." Had she thrown acid in his face she could not have administered a greater surprise to Mr. Vopel. Never for a moment had he taken that possibility into consideration, nor would he have accepted such a theory had it been suggested.

"The de—deuce, you say! I don't believe it." Then he rushed to the ticket window. "What time do you expect the next train?" he asked the agent.

The answer came back, "She's overdue now, sir, and ought to be here any minute. Had some kind of accident down the road. I haven't heard the particulars yet, myself."

Lillian had followed Vopel to the window and

now had to remind him that it would be necessary to purchase tickets. Never did a man begrudge the parting with money more than did he as he handed out the price of the tickets which were to upset all his schemes!

The boy had gone, and with him Vopel's five dollars, when one dollar would have been good pay. His carriage was ruined, he had to pay for the keep of his horse, and now to be called on to pay for two tickets for the special purpose of defeating himself, seemed a hardship which put him in anything but a pleasant humor.

- "You see, Mr. Vopel, what perseverance will do," said Lillian with a gay little laugh. "If we had turned back we surely would have missed the train."
- "Hardly that," replied Vopel, struggling to keep from showing his wrath. "The train might have missed us, but we would not have missed it, for we would not have been coming for it."
- "My, you seem to improve under pressure, Mr. Vopel. Your manner of reasoning is something to be proud of."
- "I think you are making fun of me, Miss Lillian. But you see I still have it in my power to punish you. Suppose I should refuse to use these tickets. Then you would be in as bad a fix as ever."
- "Do you mean that you would do such a thing, Mr. Vopel!"

"Well, hardly, Miss Lillian. I am only too pleased to see such a happy ending to all our misfortunes."

Then to himself, he said, "What a lie! But I guess I have paid enough to cover it."

Their conversation was interrupted by the noise of the train rolling in.

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor. "We've got to make up time now."

Lillian and Vopel scrambled aboard with the two or three others who were waiting and with a sigh of relief, the girl started on her homeward journey. Up to this time she had viewed Vopel's tattered clothes as a huge joke, but now, as he took his seat beside her, surrounded as they were by fashionable city people, a tinge of crimson spread over her cheeks and her levity gave way to mortification.

She turned towards the window and busied herself by looking at the trees and rocks as they sped by them.

This kind of thing was not to Vopel's liking. Whenever in the company of his superiors, which was certainly the case when with Lillian, he wanted to be seen and heard, hoping thereby to profit by his associations.

"Miss Lillian," he said, "you have not told me yet how you managed to escape without being injured in the slightest degree."

"Yes," she answered, "I was fortunate. You see, I was holding on to the carriage as firmly as I could to save myself from being thrown out, when the shock came and we were bound heavenward. The next instant the bed of the carriage struck the ground with a thud and there I sat as though nothing had happened. But oh, how funny you did look as you went over that dashboard! Have you ever seen a frog leap from a log into the water? Well that is as near your attitude as I could describe it. It was so funny that I could have laughed, had I not been so frightened."

Vopel lapsed once more into silence. How could he manage to reach his home without being seen, shaken up as he was and in such dilapidated clothes? He might be recognized. He must have a closed carriage. But how to get one, without attracting too much attention, was the question.

Once home and over the effects of the rough handling he had experienced, he felt sure that he could concoct some more successful and less dangerous plan for becoming master of the confident creature by his side. For he was of that bulldog type to whom to be beaten means only to prepare for a fresh attack; and even now, before he had recovered from the shock of his first defeat, he was planning new trouble for Lillian.

Dense clouds were rolling out of the east and

before they arrived at their station the storm broke in all its fury. Thus was the question of carriage solved for Vopel; as all the carriages in waiting had their curtains drawn. The transfer from train to carriage was quickly made, and Vopel saw Lillian safely landed on her porch before going to his own home.

With Lillian, matters were different. She could see nothing but pure accident in her adventures of the afternoon, and she was inclined to praise her escort for having brought her through them so well. Of course, she had noticed that his words and actions at times were not just what they should have been. But then, who could be master of oneself under such strenuous circumstances?

The evening passed, also the following day, with no signs of life from Mr. Vopel's house. As twilight was casting its calm o'er the earth, Lillian approached Ed, who was seated under a large tree indulging in his favorite occupation—smoking a pipe.

"Ed," she said, "don't you think some of us ought to go over to inquire for Mr. Vopel? He may have been injured more than he knew of last night."

"No," Ed answered shortly. "I don't know that any one round here is sufficiently interested to care whether he is injured or not."

"What has come over you this last week, Ed?

You are not yourself at all. Won't you tell me what it is?"

- "What's the use? You have your own affairs to attend to, and don't seem very much interested in mine. I can have mine."
- "That's not like you, Ed, to speak to me so. We have always been the best of friends, yet now you seem to avoid me."
- "Well, I guess you don't miss me much; your time is pretty well taken up."

Lillian understood what he meant and did not care to prolong the conversation, for she divined the direction it would take.

- "Won't you go over to Mr. Vopel's for me?" she asked.
- "None of it for me," he said sneeringly. "I don't want to see him."
- "Well, Ed, common decency demands that some one of us should inquire, and if you won't, I shall go myself." So saying she swung round and started towards the gate without once looking back.

Jealous rage consumed Ed, as he sat there, but not much time was left him for reflection before Lillian disappeared behind the trees which lined the road between the two estates.

"She can't go there!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet to follow her. "Lillian!" he called. "Lillian! Come here, I want to speak to you!" But

Lillian made no answer. He then ran on, with the hope of overtaking her, but on reaching the road, no sign of Lillian could be seen.

"This comes from my being so pig-headed!" he thought. "She has run over there, so she could get back before dark."

Ed concluded he would go and meet her. He walked slowly along as far as Vopel's gate. The sun had set, and as night came on, he grew uneasy. What could she be doing in there all this time! It was more than he could imagine. Deeper and deeper grew the gloom until he could scarcely see the house, save that a light shone from two of the windows. He could endure the silence no longer, but would go to the house and see for himself what detained her.

An old-fashioned knocker hung on the front door in lieu of a bell and Ed raised it and let it fall defiantly. A noise like thunder rolled through the house at this unexpected demand for admission. The knocker struck like a battering ram on the heavy door.

He had but a minute to wait before the door was opened. In front of him stood the object of his hatred, John Vopel, neatly dressed in a pair of light trousers, a silk shirt, and a light-weight blue serge coat.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Hahn!" he said

affably, "I thought the sheriff of the county had come to demand retribution of me. But—won't you come in?"

"No," said Ed. "I have come for Miss Hahn."

"Ah, Miss Lillian. Well, I am sorry to say she is not here."

Ed stood for a moment looking him straight in the eyes.

"You lie!" he shouted. "I saw her come, and she has not left this house, for I have been watching it."

"That is rather strong language, sir, from one gentleman to another and to my thinking merits a sound thrashing!" As he spoke, John Vopel stepped out upon the porch, his fist clenched. He raised his hand to strike Ed a blow, but Ed moved to one side and avoided it. Before either could strike out again a man had taken a position between them.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this brawling is not for such as you—calm yourselves. I heard your heated words and recognized your voice, Ed. I came out to see what the trouble was."

"You, Sam?" Ed gasped. "What are you doing here and where is Lillian?"

"She is not here and has not been, for I had supper with Mr. Vopel and have been with him ever since; so you see, Ed, your eyes have deceived you." "Ho, ho," thought Vopel, "the young lady has started to call upon me. I wonder what is up? By jove, I am sorry she did not reach here. If I could only get her calling on me, that would be one of my strongest cards; then I could select my trump."

Ed did not tarry upon receiving Sam's assurance that Lillian had not been near the Vopel house. He knew that an apology was in order but was in no humor for making it then; so turning on his heels he walked away, wondering how he could have been fooled in this way. He was very cross as he entered his father's grounds, nor did it soothe his troubled mind to find Lillian seated there on the bench he had so recently left, calmly viewing the stars.

"Hello, there, Ed?" she called out; "where have you been?"

"The very question," he said, "that I wanted to ask you."

"I have been right here. Did you change your mind and go over to Mr. Vopel's for me?"

"I went over there for you but not to inquire for his health. Where—I mean how—did you get back here, after you went down the road?"

"Oh, so you followed me, did you?"

A peal of laughter, like the tinkling of silver bells, sounded on the night air, as Lillian enjoyed to the full, poor Ed's discomfiture. When at length she

could compose herself sufficiently to speak, she said:

"You silly fellow! I only went as far as the hedge to the Vopel estate, when I saw Sam entering the house with the master of it, and I knew that my errand was unnecessary; so I turned off through the shrubbery to return to you. But behold, you had gone. So I sat down quietly to await your return."

"Well, I think you could find better employment than chasing around with that fellow anyway," replied Ed, still in a huff. "Who is he and what do you know about him? One might think you had known him for years. 'Miss Lillian this' and 'My dear Miss Lillian that.' Oh, it makes me weary to see him playing with you and you swallowing the bait whole."

"If you know anything against Mr. Vopel, Ed, tell me what it is and have done with it. If you don't, I wouldn't show bad taste by insinuating things that have no foundation."

So intent were they in their little squabble that neither heard Mr. Hahn as he quietly walked across the lawn and stood behind them listening.

"Children," he said, "what are you wasting this star-lit night in this way for? You should not disagree at anytime, especially during the lovers' watch—from nine to twelve."

"Oh, father," cried Lillian, "he is just too mean

for anything. He is in a mood for finding fault, and nothing seems to please him."

- "Well," replied Ed, "you're not going to please me by hanging on that fellow's coat tails, you may be sure of that."
- "Hanging on to whose coat tails, Ed? What do you mean?" asked his father.
- "Why, father, where have your eyes been? Ever since that fellow Vopel took possession of the place over there, he has done nothing but watch our house and as soon as Lillian shows herself, over he comes. You can't shake him without a downright insult, either!"
- "Well, my boy, if it pleases Lillian, I don't see that either you or I have any right to complain. It is evident from what you say that Mr. Vopel does not come to see us, so the best thing we can do is to keep out of his way."

Ed remained silent. It had never been his habit to argue with his father, nor would he now, especially as he did not care to have him know to what extent he was vexed. Mr. Hahn drew up a chair, intent upon pouring oil on the troubled waters. He commenced in his old easy way to talk of the days when he had first seen the mountains which were now casting their shadows over them, of his fondness for the spot where he had passed so many pleasant summers.

While he was speaking Ed rose and saying goodnight, walked to the house, which he entered and passed through, leaving by the rear door. This subterfuge was no doubt intended to convey the impression that he was going to bed, but sleep to him was impossible at this time.

"My dear child," said Mr. Hahn, "tell me what is this difference between you and Ed. I had hoped that you and he were going to get along well together."

"Father," responded Lillian, "you know how much I think of Ed, but since Mr. Vopel has been paying me some attention he seems to have taken offence. He evidently dislikes him for some reason."

"Yes, I suppose he does, and to me the reason seems very natural; he does not like a rival."

"Ed has never spoken to me in any other than a brotherly way, and I am sure he cannot hold Mr. Vopel in that light."

"Jealousy, my dear girl," mused Mr. Hahn, "will throw queer lights and shadows, and to us, standing in the background, there seems to be no reason or excuse for them, yet to the person concerned they are very real and we should make all due allowance for them."

"How foolish," Lillian said. "I love Ed the same as I love you. You are my benefactors and my gratitude had ripened into love; yet I cannot

see why Mr. Vopel should be dragged into our midst to cause disorder. Surely, I am committing no offence in walking and driving with him."

"No, I suppose not; that is to no one but Ed. He is evidently afraid that you will grow to like this stranger."

"Well, I am not ashamed to admit it, father; I do like Mr. Vopel. He has a free, easy way that I admire, but it does not follow that he is going to like me."

"Not much doubt of that, my dear,—not if he has two eyes and the least bit of common sense."

"Where is mother?" Lillian asked, anxious now to turn the conversation from herself.

"On the porch with Nina. Would you like to join them?"

"Yes," she said. She arose and taking Mr. Hahn's arm, they went to join the ladies on the porch.

Mrs. Hahn, like Ed, had a troubled look for the last few days. Her heart was set on seeing her son marry Lillian, and being quick to read the signs of human nature foresaw the trouble hovering over her boy's life. Not that she was provoked at Lillian. She realized that the child, as she still considered her, had a right to choose her own company; yet she never let an opportunity go by without saying something in favor of her son. His good qual-

ities were to her innumerable, and she could not understand for an instant how anyone could be compared with Ed.

As Mr. Hahn and Lillian joined them, Mrs. Hahn said.

"If Ed and Will were only with us now, how complete this circle would be."

"Ed should be here," said her husband, "with Will it is different; he cannot neglect his business. He is a bright lad and will make a name for himself. Do you expect him up to-night, Nina?"

"Yes, father, he wrote me that he would be up on the late train and that he would stay with us Saturday and Sunday. The next time he comes, it will be his vacation and he will be with us for two whole weeks. My! how long a time it seems now, but as it draws to a close it will only seem like a dream."

"Such, my dear, is life," said Mrs. Hahn. "As we look forward to our three score years and ten, it seems an eternity. As we look back, we have but the fleeting shadows of a memory."

"Yet," said Lillian, "what a pleasant memory it must be, mother, when a life has been so full of noble deeds as yours."

"I have done my best, dear, and have but few regrets. Yet there is much that I wish to see accomplished ere my eyes close in their last sleep."

"Oh, mother, do not talk of such things. We are going to live on forever—this little family of ours!"

"Yes, Lillian, I trust that is true; but a part of that eternity will be spent in another world."

"Hark!" interrupted Nina. "I hear someone singing. It appears to be on the road." They all listened, as a deep, bass voice chanted a popular air at no great distance from them.

"That sounds like Sam's voice," observed Mr. Hahn, "though I never knew him to be musical before." While he was speaking Sam passed beneath the light at the end of the path. He was on his way home. Mr. Hahn called to him to come in, but Sam answered that he would be over in the morning. The thickness of his voice told the story—he had been drinking, a fact that came as a great shock to Mr. Hahn, who knew that Sam was as unused to liquor as he was to song.

"That fellow Vopel is not bringing a very good influence to work in this community," thought he, "if this is a sample of it."

Sam passed on into the darkness, his song hushed, a sense of mortification at having been discovered had taken possession of him. He was now muttering to himself in an incoherent way, "What a fool I am!" He would say it over and over. "I knew I could not stand the stuff. Why did I take it?

What will Mr. Hahn think of me now? I won't be able to look him in the face again."

Sam ceased his muttering, but his mind was still active, and the thought occurred to him that he would go up in the mountains camping until the Hahns left for the city. This idea took a strong hold on him, and on reaching his lodgings he went to work with a will, packing up the necessary outfit. He was busily engaged sorting his things when he was startled by the sound of footsteps outside.

"Only some one taking a short cut," thought he. But in another moment there came a gentle rap at the door. "Who's there!" he demanded. Little did this sound like the genial Sam with his usual salutation, "Come in!"

"It is I, Sam. Open the door."

Sam recognized Lillian's voice. He opened the door, and there, with a cloak closely drawn round her head, which almost hid her face, she stood.

"Come in, Miss Lillian," he said. "Now tell me, what has brought you here at this time of night?"

"Forgive me, Sam, for intruding," Lillian answered, "but I wanted to know how Mr. Vopel is."

Sam watched Lillian for a moment before answering. Then he said, "I hope you are not falling in love with that fellow, are you, Miss Lillian?"

"What nonsense, Sam! Can't I inquire if he

was injured without being in love with him?" she asked timidly.

- "Well, hardly, miss; at least not at this hour of the night and over here in my house at that. Don't you realize that it is after eleven o'clock?"
- "That's all the more reason why you should answer my question and let me go," she replied quickly.
- "Oh, I can answer that while I am taking you home."
- "You are not going to take me home, Sam. I shall slip in the same way I came out. But tell me of Mr. Vopel?" she insisted.
- "He's all right, Miss Lillian. I wish you didn't---"
- "There, there, Sam, you need not mind that. I will get all the lecturing I require at home. Every one seems bent on saying something disagreeable about Mr. Vopel; yet when I ask them why, they confess they have no reason."

This sudden appearance of Lillian's had the effect of entirely sobering Sam, and set him about weighing in his mind what he should do; which one he should serve: Ed Hahn or Mr. Vopel? He thought a great deal of the lad; his life has been too intimately connected with his, for that to be otherwise. In fact, he had as much as agreed to assist him in accomplishing Vopel's downfall; but then

had not Ed ignored his advice? Had he not in his headstrong way done precisely what he, Sam, had counseled him not to do?

On the other hand, here, almost in the dead of night, had come Miss Lillian, if not to ask him for help, at least to get what information and help she could through him, concerning Mr. Vopel.

Ever since the day Sam had picked up that unconscious child from the dust of the road, he had felt a peculiar interest in her. Year after year he had watched her grow and many times thought of some excuse that might take him to the Hahns' house, so he could feast on her beautiful face, yet his love for Lillian was only a platonic love or, more accurately speaking, a love which a guardian might have for his ward. But now had the supreme moment come to him: he must decide into whose service he was going to cast his efforts.

As is usually the case, a beseeching pair of eyes framed in a delicately chiseled face, won the victory. Lillian had conquered a strong foe and had acquired a powerful ally, all in the same moment.

"Miss Lillian," said Sam, advancing and holding out his hand, "there isn't any use of you telling me that you don't love this fellow. I have watched you too long and know you too well. The change came over you the first time you talked with him. He may have hypnotized you and he may not, I

don't know, but there is one thing I am sure of and that is, you can depend on Sam to do your bidding."

"I thank you, Sam, from my heart. And I'll admit, since I cannot hide it from you, that Mr. Vopel has shot his arrow straight and true. How deeply it has penetrated my heart, I do not know myself; I have not had time to find out. Only, Sam, I do like him, you know."

"Well, Miss Lillian, what are your orders? You see I have surrendered unconditionally."

"Tell me, Sam, what did Mr. Vopel say about me to-night?"

"He said, Miss Lillian, that you were the handsomest woman he had ever seen."

Lillian's face flushed so that Sam could distinctly see it in the uncertain light of the lamp.

"What else? Was that all he said?"

"Oh, he said a whole lot of things that I can't just remember now. About all I can remember is his saying. 'Let me fill your glass' or 'Have another.' You see, he wanted to get my tongue loosened, so I would tell him what I knew about you."

"Well, what did you tell him?"

Lillian assumed an attitude of great attention, devouring Sam with her eyes.

"Nothing," was the answer, "that is I don't know that I told him anything."

- "Oh, pshaw," said Lillian, "you might have told him something nice about me."
- "So I will, Miss Lillian, the next time I see him. But you see I was thinking of Ed then."
- "Now, if you are going to begin talking about Ed I guess I will go." And before Sam had time to remonstrate or accompany her Lillian had thrown her cloak over her head and had darted out into the darkness. Sam went to the door to look after her but the night had closed round her—she was gone.

Was he doing right? He did not know, nor was he much inclined to question. Left alone, he became drowsy again and it was not many minutes before his head was nodding.

For a second time that night a rap came at his door. Sam sprang to his feet, convinced that Lillian had returned. He opened the door but Lillian was not there. A man stood in her place. It was Ed, who had been waiting all the evening for Sam's return.

Ed did not wait for an invitation to enter. Sam seemed more surprised now in facing him than he had been when he opened the door for Lillian. "Did he see her?" he thought immediately.

As Ed entered, he noticed Sam's preparations for departure.

"Going away, Sam?" he asked.

- "No, I guess not. I thought I would, but I have changed my mind."
 - "Made it up, eh?"
- "What do you mean?" said Sam, turning quickly to read what he could in Ed's face.
- "Oh, it's all right, old fellow. I won't say anything, you know."
 - "What are you talking about, Ed?"
- "Oh, nothing; only I saw her come in, so I made myself scarce. By and by some one flew by me on the path. I made out that it was your visitor and that you would be alone, so here I am."

"What did you mean when you asked me if I had made it up?" Sam demanded.

"Why, that's simple enough," Ed answered. "Here you are packing your things together in haste to get away. A young lady calls. There had been a disagreement, you know, a little falling out. Now comes the lady, penitent. 'It's all her fault,' she says, and 'Won't you forgive her.' What's more natural? We make up, we don't go away. Hence we don't pack the rest of our things. Ha! ho! ho!" Ed's laughter rang long and merrily. "So I have found you out, have I? That heart of adamant has been pierced at last. For that matter, it may have been pierced long ago, but we were not sharp enough to detect it."

Had Sam been a less cautious person he would

have denied having a sweetheart calling upon him. He, however, reasoned that by allowing Ed to believe his own theory there would be less danger of Lillian's mission becoming known. Still it would not be well to give in too readily.

- "Where have you been sleeping?" he said.
 "You must have had a mighty uncomfortable bed to have had such wild dreams."
- "Come, come, Sam, you can't play that game on me. I am sorry now that I didn't bolt right in. Then I wonder what excuse you would make."
- "Well, if you think you are right, why go ahead. It won't hurt me. But, tell me, why are you not in bed? It is past your time."
- "Simply because I wanted to see you and find out what that fellow had to say after I left."
- "Oh, Mr. Vopel, you mean? He is a fine fellow, Ed, when you come to know him right. He seemed sorry that you and he had nearly come to blows and said he hoped you would overlook it."
- "It's not very likely that I will," said Ed. "If he has water in his blood and wants to show the white feather, it will only prove what I thought of him was true."
- "I wouldn't put too much dependence on that, my boy. He seems well preserved and as strong as, eh—well, as strong as he should be."
 - "What are you trying to do, Sam? Do you think

you can scare me? Or has one night's hospitality outshone the friendship of my father's household for years?"

Sam winced under this imputation of fickleness; he saw the truth as it appeared to Ed. Yet he dared make no reply. To betray Lillian was out of the question, and there seemed no other way for him to account for his defence of Mr. Vopel.

"It strikes me," he muttered to himself, "that once when a boy I happened to be passing a school house and getting curious I peeped in through the window. That must have been the time that I heard the expression, 'Silence is golden,' and I guess this is the time for me to follow its advice."

That Ed was not pleased with the position taken by Sam was evident. He sat a moment in silence, then taking up his hat, which he had thrown on a chair, opened the door and passed out. As the door closed behind him, Sam heard a gruff "good-night."

"Well, this is a pretty fix I am in now," he soliloquized. "And when my game is played out, I wonder what they will all think of me." In a mechanical way he took out his watch and opened it. As his eyes fell on the hands he gave a start. "What! So late as that?" He spoke as though he were addressing some one. Then continuing to himself, he said: "It's a pity I didn't get away before that girl caught me. Then I wouldn't be in

this position. No, it ain't either; for then I might never have had a chance of doing her a favor. And one ounce of her gratitude is worth a pound of Ed's bluster. Well, I never worried about anything before and I am not going to begin now. So, Sammy, get you to bed."

A moment later the light in his lodgings went out, which was good evidence that Sam had followed his own advice.

CHAPTER XVII.

"THAT'S TOO EASY."

WILL HARRIS had settled down into a thorough business man. After the reconciliation with his father, he had re-entered the mercantile field and so efficient was he that in two years he was taken into the firm.

The new life and energy infused into the old house acted like a tonic. Will made hosts of friends and added many new customers, thus placing the house on a sound financial basis.

His father in his sixty-third year was stricken with paralysis and though everything possible was done for him he was unable to enter in active business again. The firm's name remained the same, yet the entire responsibility of the business now rested upon Will's shoulders.

Though still a young man, Will had become very capable. He had his family to work for and he knew only too well that their position in life would depend greatly upon his efforts, so he stuck close

to the store, denying himself much recreation that naturally would appeal to a healthy young man.

Each Saturday afternoon he would board a train and hurry to those he loved, but this once he had planned an extra day. He was going home on Friday night! There were to be two whole days with his wife and children—a luxury not enjoyed since they had forsaken the city for the mountains.

A carriage had been sent to the station for him, and Nina eagerly listened for the sound of returning hoof beats. She sprang from her chair as she saw the carriage turn in the path, and the coachman, seeing her coming reined up the horses allowing Will to alight.

Two forms were seen in the road for an instant; then they merged into one as Will held his wife in his arms, and their lips were joined in a long kiss of welcome. Up on the porch, Mr. Hahn's hand gently stole towards his wife.

"That is a lovely couple, Bessie," he said nodding towards the youthful pair.

"Yes," replied his wife, "and they seem to agree perfectly on every subject,—which is very unusual, as young couples run nowadays."

Will and Nina slowly strolled towards the porch for there were many exchanges of confidence to be made in that short walk. After the greetings were over with the older people, what a homelike gathering they all were!

On the following morning Will was up early; so was Will Jr., and father and son started to climb the mountain. For an hour they romped and climbed in the bracing air, and then returned to the house to be greeted by Nina and the baby.

"Well," Will remarked gaily, "you can say what you please about New York, Nina, but if you want a good appetite, this is the place to get it. I hope you have laid in a good supply; for I am sure I could eat the breakfast of ten men this morning! And by the way, didn't you hear the breakfast bell?"

"No, and I don't expect to for half an hour yet. So you have ample time to accumulate more appetite, my dear."

Her husband made a wry face; and turning to his son, said,

"Will, run around to the kitchen and see if the cook won't give you a slice of bread;—two slices, I mean; one for you and one for me."

"There you go, teaching the boy bad tricks the first day you are up here! We have taught the children that they must wait until they get to the table," Nina scolded mildly.

"Make a hungry boy wait for the breakfast bell? That is cruelty, and I shall inform the society for

the prevention of cruelty to children of your methods," he replied, as the boy hurried off towards the kitchen to appear with two huge slices of bread completely covered with butter and sugar, a moment later.

"Here, papa," said he, "this is your piece, 'cause it's the biggest." And the two bit into their portions with gusto.

"It is hard to tell," declared Nina, "which is the bigger boy of the two. You are children both of you!"

Will swallowed the generous bite he had taken, before offering his portion to Nina. "Come," said he, "have a bite with us; you don't know how good it is."

"No, thank you," Nina laughed, straightening out the baby's dress. "My bread and sugar days are over."

"It's awfully good, mamma," urged Will Jr., and she succumbed to his urgings.

When the last crumb had disappeared, there were three faces covered with bread and sugar, and it appeared as if there were three children about, instead of two as Nina had suggested.

"Well, Well, Well! What have you youngsters been up to? You surely look as though you have been having a good time," called another voice blandly.

- "Good morning, father," Nina cried, as she ran to Mr. Hahn and throwing her arms around his neck gave him a bread and butter kiss.
- "There, sir!" she exclaimed. "Now you will not dare to tell on us, for you look as though you had been in the same sugar bowl yourself."
- "Oh you rogues!" he cried, then called loudly, "Bessie, come here and help me with these rascals." But as soon as Mrs. Hahn put in her appearance, Will had her in a sticky embrace and left the incriminating evidence upon her face! They all joined in a hearty laugh which bubbled up from their light hearts, like sparkling water from a clear spring.
- "And here comes Ed," Will remarked, slyly. "Are you going to make him an accomplice too, Nina?"
- "He's too cross lately; I wouldn't dare," she demurred.
- "Well," said Mr. Hahn, "I think we had all better go and wash our faces, for I hear the jingle of the breakfast bell and this veneering will not satisfy the inner man."

What a breakfast! Ed and Lillian who joined the group seemed out of place there. All the rest were happy and full of life, while these two had little or nothing to say; their thoughts seeming far away. And as soon as breakfast was over, Lillian left the dining-room for a solitary walk. Her direction

was towards the village, which would take her near Mr. Vopel's house, Ed noted savagely.

When Lillian reached the end of the dividing hedge, however, she turned back; for she had seen Mr. Vopel on the lawn and would not have him think that she was anxious to meet him. Her journey had been far enough, however, for Mr. Vopel's quick eye had caught sight of her, and he smiled to himself in a satisfied manner.

"This conquest is too easy," he mused. "Never have things come my way before with so little effort on my part. Guess I'm being pursued instead of pursuing this time." He waited for some time to see if the girl would return, but as she did not, he concluded that he would go towards her. Taking a short cut, he pushed his way through the hedge which divided the properties and stepped across Mr. Hahn's lawn at a smart pace.

As he did so, Ed, who had followed Lillian and was now talking to her, frowned and walked away. Nina and Will who were seated on the porch enjoying the morning breezes, had their attention attracted by the approach of Mr. Vopel. Nina nodded in recognition of Mr. Vopel's salute and Will asked,

"Who is your friend, Nina?" Mr. Vopel had occupied the house between the trees only since the beginning of the summer and Will had never seen their neighbor before.

- "He is no friend of mine or, in fact, of any of us except Lillian; and I wish I could say the same for her," she said decidedly.
 - "Where does he come from?"
- "No one knows but himself, and he does not seem inclined to gratify the curiosity of others."

Will, while still looking at him, remarked—"Well, little girl, I think I will take sides with the majority. I don't like his looks."

Lillian and Vopel left the lawn and soon disappeared down the mountain road.

- "Mrs. Mother," Will said suddenly, "do you think we could sneak away for a while? It has been a long time since we have romped together over these hills. I guess the children will find something to amuse them without us about."
- "Oh, they are all right, Will; mother will keep an eye on them, and you may depend on it, they will come to no harm while she is round," assented Nina with alacrity, and arm in arm, they started out. Involuntarily, when they reached the road, they turned in the same direction taken by Lillian and Mr. Vopel.
- "This will never do," said Nina, noticing their choice, "they will think we are following them."
- "I guess this mountain is big enough for two couples; but—about face! forward march! and if we do not travel in a circle we will not meet the

rear guard or make Lillian feel incensed at our taking an airing on the mountains!"

"Let us go down to the village, Will: I want to show you a pretty hat they have there," urged Nina merrily.

"It isn't any use, Nina, because I haven't a penny in these clothes; and, besides, the air is purer the higher you go, and we, you know, are in search of a higher altitude," he said as gaily.

"Oh, so you are going to get stingy with me, are you? I suppose all my ribbons and laces will have to be laid away to make room for calico frocks now."

"Ribbons and laces or calico frocks, I love them all, Nina,—if they only adorn my divine little wife. And as for getting stingy, why, come along, and we will buy every hat in the shop, if they look well on you."

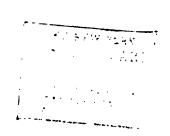
"You haven't changed a bit, Will, since you were up here last," she laughed, contented as a child. "Let me see, that must have been at least two months ago."

"Come, come, little girl! What are you after now? It must be more than a bonnet this time, for it is only six days since I was here. Tell me, what it is, and we will see what can be done about it."

"I was just thinking how much nicer a kiss would be than a new hat, but since you are making



"Well you needn't think she will long for one if you are not around."





me out so extravagant, I suppose you will even count the cost——"

A smothered sound completed the sentence. When Nina struggled free of his arms, she gasped in a scandalized voice,

- "Will, don't you see those people coming?"
- "People or no people, I guess my wife will never long for a kiss when I am around," he insisted warmly.
- "Well, you needn't think she will long for one, if you are not around," cried his wife as she rearranged her hair.
- "Not even if Lillian's friend were here? You could not be tempted by that elegant cavalier?"
- "Darling, have I not lived with you long enough to know?" she whispered. "You and the children are the light of my life. You are my ambition and my strength." Will kissed her again and again, each forgetting for the time all thoughts of near or other living creatures. A flock of sheep were grazing on the side of the hill that turned their backs discreetly on this loving couple.

The world might go round as it pleased; it brought no worry to either one or the other of these two groups on the mountain.

The little lambs played like children giving a touch of abandon to the picture that would please an artist. Suddenly Will started back from Nina's

ME BARRAGE

arms making her look with such sudden surprise as to almost upset her balance.

- "What is the matter, dear?" she asked in alarm.
- "Look there," said Will, pointing to the ground.
 "Can you tell me of what use such a thing as that can be."

Nina had spent so many summers in the mountains that she could not be easily frightened by any form of life she might meet there. As her eyes followed the direction indicated by Will's finger, an exclamation of surprise escaped her.

"My! isn't he a big fellow. He is coming right towards us and he means fight."

A very large spider it was they saw crossing the road and, nothing daunted, he prepared to attack these mountain intruders to his home.

With the first impulse of a man, Will picked up a rock and would have killed the venomous insect, but his hand was stayed by Nina.

"Don't, Will! That is the largest specimen I have ever seen, and isn't he brilliant? Let us capture him alive and add him to my collection at the house."

This would have been a very easy matter if the spider had given his consent, but Mr. Spider of the gay coat preferred his liberty. As often as they would drop a handkerchief over him he would run from beneath it, occasioning a hasty scrambling or

Ì

a scream from his captors. So busy were Nina and Will in their quest of him that Lillian and Vopel were upon them before they were aware of their presence. They, it seemed, had traveled in the circle which Will and Nina had so consciously avoided.

"What have you there?" asked Mr. Vopel as he came forward.

"Oh, it's a beautiful spider," Nina cried. "We are trying to catch him for our cabinet at home."

"Bah! such things have no right to lives," said Vopel, as he sprang forward and ground the little creature in the dust with the heel of his boot.

"Oh, Mr. Vopel, we wanted him!" stormed Nina. Then glancing at Will, she continued stiffly, "Let us resume our walk, please."

So quickly had the incident happened that neither of them had spoken a word to Lillian, and as Will and Nina turned away, she said,

"I am very sorry, Mr. Vopel, that you did that; they wanted that spider."

"If you are sorry, Miss Lillian, so am I; but I never had any patience with bug hunters." So she laughed at Nina's loss with him, as they wheeled about to walk back to the house. As they entered the gate they were joined by the children—Nina's children, who were having a merry frolic on the lawn.

- "Say, Aunt Lillian," called Will Jr., "do you know where mamma and papa have gone?"
- "Yes, dear, we just met them going up the mountain road."
- "Why don't you send the whole bevy up the mountain road after them?" urged Vopel under his breath. "These brats bother me."
- "You don't mean these children, do you, Mr. Vopel? They are the dearest little people I know," said Lillian, opening her eyes wide in surprise.
- "Yes, 'dearest' in the way of trouble and bother, I have no doubt."
 - "Don't you like children, Mr. Vopel?"
- "About as much as I do that spider I put my heel on up the road," he replied gruffly.
- "I am sorry to hear you say that," remarked Lillian; "for I adore them."
- "Well, I guess I had better leave you with them, then, for they simply annoy me. Good morning, Miss Lillian. I will drop over after supper, if you will not be engaged then."
- "Oh, but I shall be. I will be amusing these 'brats', so you had better not come," she cried spiritedly.
- "I think I'll take my chances. They will go to bed early, you know. Until then." As he spoke, Vopel raised his hat and turning about he quickly withdrew.

- "Say, aunty," remarked Will Jr., "I don't like that fellow, do you?"
- "Little boys should not ask questions," replied Lillian stiffly.

"Well, I saw him the other day talking to an awful bad looking man. I guess they were fighting, for he said to the other man, 'You might as well keep away from here, for I tell you I am playing a different game," and the other fellow said, 'That's all right, but where is the stuff.' They looked awful mad, too, so I just got away from there and did not hear any more."

Lillian became absorbed in thought. After all, supposing John Vopel were not what he represented himself to be? Could it be possible that he was deceiving her? No,—she would not believe it! Nina or some of the old folks had been talking before the boy and he could see only bad in Mr. Vopel or in any one that the man might meet.

"I will go and see Sam," she mentally resolved, "and get him to find out about this man Willie has seen."

Without saying a word to anyone, Lillian proceeded to Sam's house and knocked on the door, but no response came. She knocked again and waited but Sam was not at home. So every day her friendship for Mr. Vopel was ripening into a deep love and with a nature like hers it would

be hard to swerve from the chosen path. All this she knew full well; and yet she would not willingly make a false step. If any one could bring her convincing proof of his unworthiness, she would spurn him and refuse to see him again. But no one had any proof; it was nothing but personal dislike or surmises—and after all, one doesn't want all creation to love one's suitor!

"If he should ask me to marry him to-morrow, I would accept," she said decidedly. "He does not like children; but what of that? There is many a good man who holds the same opinion."

After dinner, Lillian returned to her own room and did not leave it until after supper.

Half an hour or so later, John Vopel started out to keep his engagement with her. He was figuring up the situation and a cloud came over his face.

"This is all very fine," he thought, "but it comes too high for me. I will soon have to utilize my old friend, or else start out for myself, or be without a penny. On the other hand, I might lay aside my prejudice for marriage and rest in the lap of luxury all the rest of my days. But the very thought of it makes me creep. Yet here is a serious matter and worthy my sober consideration.

"The question is; has she enough in her own name to support a man as fond of doing nothing

as I have lately become? A delicate question, that, but one that must be solved speedily.

"Ah, I see my charmer through the foliage, waiting for me! She looks sad or perhaps it is only thoughtful. Shall I drop at her feet now or allow her more time to think still more tenderly of me? Guess a little waiting will do my cause no harm." Reasoning thus, he turned away in the direction again of his own house, lighting a cigar at the same time, for company.

As he strode off through the woods which encircled the estate, he was gruffly halted by a coarse-looking individual with the stature of a giant and whose face plainly told of a life of crime.

"Hello, there, Mr. John Vopel! You're looking mighty fine this evening. Have you got any of the 'dust' that you're not using about you?" was demanded coarsely.

"No," said Vopel. "But since you are here, I want to have a talk with you."

"Talking don't go with me. I want cash, and what's more, I've got to have it. So pass it over, old man, and save those pretty togs you've got on!"

"I've told you," said Vopel firmly, "that I haven't any money. The fact is, I will have to do something to raise some."

"There ain't enough salt around here to help me swallow that story. It takes money to run a ranch

like that." As the man spoke, he jerked his thus, b over his shoulder in the direction of Vopel's house.

"That's just it," agreed Vopel, "it's the house that's used up all the cash I had. Meet me to-night right here, at eleven o'clock, and we will see if we can't fix up some job that will supply the urgent and immediate necessities of us both. I can't stay any longer now; but to-night at eleven!"

The man watched Vopel as he turned off towards Mr. Hahn's house and roundly did he curse him for his ingratitude. "Who snatched that fellow from the ruins that were falling about him and gave him a start? He seems to forget all this; but I have something here that will make him remember it." Clapping his hand to his hip pocket, he nodded his head to emphasize the remark, before disappearing in the dense forest.

A pipe and bitter reminiscences were this man's company until the hands of his watch pointed to the hour of eleven when he emerged from the trees to join his companion in crime,—

But let us go back to Vopel. When he parted with his comrade he went by the road and entered Mr. Hahn's property by the front gate. As he neared the house he saw Lillian seated on the porch, surrounded by the entire family, minus the children, who had been safely tucked in their cozy beds. As he approached the group Lillian arose and went to

the edge of the porch to receive him. Vopel said good evening to all, but seemed in no hurry to join them on the verandah.

"Shall we sit here or on the lawn?" Lillian asked, noticing his hesitancy.

"Well, Miss Lillian, if it is all the same to you we might sit on the lawn where perhaps I might be permitted to smoke this cigar and not annoy anyone."

The excuse was a rather lame one, and she knew it,—as every male occupant of that mansion was an inveterate smoker; but it served its purpose! Lillian tripped nimbly down the steps and they took a seat not far from the house, yet at sufficient distance to allow them to talk freely without being overheard.

"Miss Lillian," said Vopel, "or may I call you Lillian? You see, I am considerably older than you, yet it does not prevent my heart from beating quickly when in your presence. You, no doubt, have noticed that I have spent every available moment at your side and must, I feel sure, have seen the deep interest I take in you. Don't you think, Lillian dear, that in some distant corner of the earth we could be happy together? We could go far away from all those who, without cause, seem to have taken a dislike to me and there by the side of some

murmuring brook we could live for each other and ignore all the world besides."

Vopel's arm stole around Lillian's waist; their hands clasped; and looking down into her eyes, he spoke with all the passion of an ardent man:

"Tell me, my darling, that you love me and do not cast me aside. True love knocks at the door of a woman's heart but once in her life, so do not refuse to hearken to its appeal."

Lillian's head was now resting on Vopel's shoulder, as he held her in a close embrace.

"Mr. Vopel," she murmured softly.

"Do not call me Mr. Vopel, my darling; call me John, so as to let me know that you care for me," he urged chidingly.

Lillian raised her eyes to his face and drew closer to him.

"John," she uttered, "you have opened two gates for me to-night. To enter one, it seems I must be forced through the other. The gates open the way to Heaven and to torment. Unfortunately, these gates do not stand side by side, that I might choose my going. But see, they are situated one before the other. I enter into Heaven through the gate of love. If I could only close my eyes there, John, and rest in complete happiness, I could easily answer your question. But look you; beyond there stands another gate over which is inscribed INGRATI-

TUDE — SELFISHNESS—OBLIVION—TOR-MENT.

"Oh, John, cannot you see through that gate? It is cold and bleak and a barren waste. There is but one redeeming feature in it. Far away, there is a glimmer of light; it is called 'Love in a Wilderness.' From here, John, it shines like burnished gold. But oh, suppose when we should reach it, it would prove naught but polished brass. Then the shadows of a living death would gather around us. Yet we are not allowed to turn back after we have passed beneath the first of these two archways. Let me think, John. Give me time to consider the joys and the consequences before answering you finally."

For the first time Lillian came to the full realization of what her love for Vopel meant. To accept him meant an estrangement. Her mother and father, Will and Nina, Ed, and the children, all would be lost to her. Did they not dislike her lover?—they had taken no pains to conceal the fact from her. What would they do if she married him?

As Vopel had said, she would have to go to some quiet corner of the earth, alone—with him. And to think that he himself should have pointed out the drawback! Did he mean it as such? No, she felt sure that he considered this sorrow of hers as an additional charm. He loved her, of that she felt sure, and wanted her wholly for himself.

"You will be patient, won't you, John, and not try to hurry me into giving you an answer? Be satisfied for to-night when I tell you that you have my love," she urged tenderly.

Love, that all consuming passion which encircles the world, how gently it steals upon us! Yet once it fastens its talons upon our hearts, how impossible it is to tear away from it!

"My darling," said Vopel, "your battle between love and duty is one which must be fought alone. I will buckle on my armor and fight by the side of Cupid: for he and I are comrades and have sworn to stand shoulder to shoulder, that we may throw down our enemies and win this lovely maiden's hand."

"Do not tempt me, John, to blindfold my eyes and travel into the future, trusting to encounter some light of sufficient strength penetrating the dark clouds of doubt which are hovering over me."

"You don't mean, Lillian, that you doubt me, do you?"

"Oh, no, dear John, it is not that; it is my own weakness I fear. Could I be happy, if I turned my back on all those who have been so very good to me? My father and mother I never knew, and outside of my old grandfather, Hiram Turner, I never had a relative. Though Mr. and Mrs. Hahn have never wished me to think of these things, they

have been true parents to me and as such I have always considered them. Now you see—God in Heaven! What is the matter, John?"

Well might she ask. For John Vopel had turned deathly pale and his whole frame was shaking miserably.

"Who did you say your grandfather was, Lillian?" he muttered when he could control his voice.

"Hiram Turner. Did you ever hear of him, John?" the girl pleaded wistfully.

He struggled for a while—then getting on his feet said with some great show of emotion,

"Yes; many years ago I met him. But, kiss me good night now. I am not feeling well and will go home."

Lillian kissed him and though the girl was unaware of it, that kiss was a farewell to him forever.

The evening was still young for a summer's night; the minute hand on his watch was slowly moving towards the half hour of nine as John Vopel, dazed and walking like a man in his sleep, entered his own home, and went directly to his room. There he dropped into a chair, his head falling forward on his folded arms as they rested before him on the table. He was awakened from his revery by the striking of the clock; ten times had the tiny hammer struck the gong. John Vopel sprang to his feet. "Enough!" cried he. "This

world moves on and I may be able to gain a lap in this mighty race yet. I may be too late to win out, but I can reach life's finish with honor, at least saved!"

Going to his closet, he took out a hand bag. Then he commenced to make a careful selection of articles from his personal effects. Many a sigh escaped him, as he put one article after another into the bag. When his task was completed, he started to pace the floor back and forth, his hands behind his back, his head bent forward. For ten minutes he never ceased, then suddenly paused.

"The horse," said he, "I will give the horse to her." Seating himself at the table, he picked up his pen and wrote:

"Please send my horse to Miss Lillian Hahn, care of Mr. Tom Hahn, Palenville. You will find enclosed twenty dollars to pay all expenses.

IOHN VOPEL."

"She shall have him to remember me by," he said, as he sealed the envelope and stamped it.

In a mechanical way he took his watch from his pocket and glanced at it; then raised it nearer to his eyes to make sure.

"What!" said he, "Eleven o'clock! I must be going or my appointment will be kept here instead of in the woods. You may wait for me, Dick, as long as you like," he laughed softly as he shook

his clenched fist towards the trees where he knew his confederate watched his windows and waited, "but never again, I hope, will you set eyes on your humble servant, Jim Lambert! To-night John Vopel's wickedness is cast off and from this time I will be an honest man—Good-bye to crime and debauchery—good-bye to my old comrades. I know all of your haunts and from now henceforth will keep clear of them."

CHAPTER XVIII.

LILLIAN'S CONFESSION.

THE moon shone full, and cast a noonday light over the many familiar scenes, as Lillian still sat on the bench where her sweetheart had left her, apart from the rest, who were laughing and talking on the porch, enjoying her first dream of love.

The first kiss of love had passed from her lips to another, a seal to the compact she was entering into. She and John—her John! Had he not given her to understand that they would live only for one another hereafter?

Have you, my reader, been placed as this sweet girl was placed that night? Can you remember that first kiss and the desire, when the loved one had gone, to be left alone that you might close your eyes and live over the scenes that had so recently brought bliss into your life? If you have, you can readily understand why Lillian lingered alone in the moonlight.

To have intruded upon or interrupted her now would have been cruel. Yet how gladly would she

have welcomed some sympathizing friend, to whom she could have poured out her joys and fears!

A sense of loneliness came upon her and her eyes filled with tears.

Not a sound escaped her as she sat weeping, with her handkerchief raised to her eyes; yet there was one whose watchful eye had been over her and who saw the trembling of her body. Mr. Hahn drew close to Lillian's side and touching the bowed head asked gently—

"My child, what trouble has come to your young life, that I find you alone and weeping?"

In vain Lillian tried to hide her grief under the protest of,—"Oh, it is nothing, father; I was only thinking."

"Sad thoughts, my dear, to have upset my little girl so. Cannot you confide in your father? I will guard your secret. You know I did once before and surely you can trust me now."

"It is not that, father. It concerns Mr. Vopel, and I know that none of you like him, so I would not bother you with it."

Mr. Hahn seated himself beside Lillian and taking one of her hands in his said,

"My child, you know I love you dearly; you are as dear to me as though you were my own flesh and blood. You are in trouble. Lay your burden on me, and see if I cannot lift it for you."

Lillian was silent a moment, then turning to her kind friend said, "If you have patience with me, father, I will tell you all."

"Go on, my child, I will not interrupt you; tell it in your own way."

Mr. Hahn waited patiently for Lillian to begin her story. A feeling of sadness had taken possession of him as he thought of the sacrifice his beautiful child was playing on the altar of love. His dislike of John Vopel was not a mere prejudice; he saw the man's cunning dishonesty beneath the cloak of respectability. To him John Vopel was an impostor. Could he persuade Lillian to believe as he did? He thought not. The child, as he considered her, had undertaken to manage this matter to suit herself. He would give her his advice but would try no coercion.

"Father," began Lillian, "when our neighbor first took possession of that house between the trees over there, he held no more interest for me than the rest of you. In fact, I scarcely noticed him. But you know how it is in places like this; people soon become acquainted. Thus it was with me. When he commenced to show me a little attention I felt nothing but respect, and it is probable that would have been the end of it, had not his character been assailed whenever his name was mentioned. Tell me, father; do you know anything against him?"

"No, Lillian. But proceed."

"Why you all dislike him I never knew. Ed especially has tried to drive him away. He went so far as to insult him in his own house. You see how natural it was, father, for my respect to turn to sympathy. Mr. Vopel has never resented the discourtesy shown him in my presence, but I think it inspired him to be more attentive and polite to me. My heart was going out to him before I realized it myself. Friendship was the next bond between us, and then it was that I undertook to defend Mr. Vopel against those who would condemn him unheard.

"Friendship, father, is but infant love, from which grows the mightier passion, that controls our lives. In this way I drifted on from friendship to love for you must not be cross with me, father, when I tell you that I love John Vopel.

"To-night he asked me to be his wife, and suggested we go far away and live only to ourselves. That is what made me cry. I love John, but the thought of leaving you all, who have been so good to me, was more than I could bear, yet what else was left for us to do? If I married him, you would all turn against me as you did him, and I could not live where I saw you all and felt your displeasure. It would break my heart, and there would be no happiness in this world for me. Yet that is not all

that worries me. While we were talking, John turned very pale and when I asked him what the matter was he said he did not feel well. Then for the first time, he kissed me, and said goodnight. If he is ill, what shall I do? I cannot go to him and I cannot sit here and think of him suffering. Tell me, father, what can I do? If you were all friendly towards him, it would be so much easier; then we could go over together and I could see him." Lillian broke down again and Mr. Hahn tried to soothe her.

"What makes you think he is going to be so ill dear, that he will be confined to the house?"

"Oh, father, if you could have seen him! He looked so ill. He is such a strong fellow. I know he would not have given up as he did unless he was suffering greatly."

Lillian wiped away the tears which were fast gathering again, and for a moment remained silent, hoping that Mr. Hahn would offer some suggestion by which she would be helped out of her difficulties. Mr. Hahn, however, made no comment; he was waiting to see if there was anything more for the girl to disclose.

She was tempted to speak of Sam, but thought better of it, as to bring Sam into her tale might prejudice Mr. Hahn against him, and she would not do this on any account.

"Lillian," said Mr. Hahn, "you have told me your story and it seems only natural to me that it should have turned out as it has; but you have not told me whether you have given your promise to Mr. Vopel or not."

"No, father. I did not. I told him that I loved him; but I could not give him my promise to-night."

"That is well, my dear, and if you will trust me, I will look up Mr. Vopel's record. You know I like my little girl too well to see her marry a man unworthy of her. In the meantime, I will call upon Mr. Vopel and inquire as to his health. If, in the end, you marry this man, remember that Mrs. Hahn and I are still your mother and father, and as such you can depend upon our love. We took you, dear, when you were a little orphan and since that time you have been the sunshine of our lives. To you, my child, we owe more than you could ever obliterate by any mistake you could make, if indeed you are making a mistake by loving Mr. Vopel."

Lillian threw her arms around Mr. Hahn's neck and kissed him heartily. "You are always good to me, father," she said, "and I know I have been very foolish to doubt your sympathy. You have made my heart lighter and I will sleep better tonight for your kindness."

"Let this be a lesson to you, my child, never to doubt your father's love and always to seek his aid

when you find your troubles more than you can endure. Now off to bed with you, as you do not wish to join our prattle to-night, and we will follow you soon."

Mr. Hahn walked with her to the rear of the house and they entered it by the kitchen door. Then he left her and went back to the porch.

"Where is Lillian?" asked Mrs. Hahn.

"She has gone to her room," answered her husband. "She does not feel well and does not wish to be disturbed."

For some time the family sat enjoying the beautiful night and talking of the many things that interest a home gathering. As for Lillian, she had gone to her room, it is true, but not to bed. After removing her outer garments, she placed a chair by the open window. Resting her elbows on the sill and placing her chin on her palms, she looked out into the still night.

She could see a light through the trees, which no doubt burned in her lover's room, but a light at that distance gives very little warmth to the heart.

The clock struck the hour below stairs and the girl raised her head to listen to the strokes.

Eleven o'clock!

The light went out in the house between the trees. "No doubt," thought Lillian, "John has said good night' to the world and will soon be asleep.

Good night dear one," she whispered, wafting a kiss towards him. Then she sighed softly. Why could she not do likewise? Why this fascination for the star-lit sky? But her eyes refused to hearken to nature's call. Sleep seemed far away; the very thought of it seemed strange and unnatural to Lillian, as she sat there planning the future, building air castles which were to be rudely shattered with the coming morning.

The clock struck twelve as the girl still sat near the window, dreaming wistfully, and as the night wore on, the air became chilled and it was not long before Lillian found herself shivering. For the first time she thought of going to bed, not to sleep—that she did not want, but to enjoy the friendly warmth of the fleecy blankets.

The hours of one and two tolled slowly, before her eyes gave way to the weariness that now overpowered them.

CHAPTER XIX.

DICK REVEALS ALL.

"It will soon be time to prepare for church, and I don't want any of you late to-day," said Mr. Hahn as he moved through the house on the following morning. His remark seemed unnecessary, however, as everything in the house seemed to be pointing in the one direction—preparation for church.

Still there was one pair of wistful eyes turned upon him which pleaded persistently, "Won't you find out for me please?" Mr. Hahn, without appearing to make it an object, passed close to where Lillian stood. "I am going over to his house now," said he pointedly, "and will be back directly." The girl smiled gratefully as she saw him go out the door.

He was gone longer than there seemed any occasion for. The carriage had been standing at the stoop some time waiting to take them all to church, yet he did not return. "Come," said Mrs. Hahn, finally, "we may as well drive on. Perhaps we will pick Father up along the road, I saw him go in the direction of the village."

After they were all seated in the carriage and had started off, Mr. Hahn was seen approaching the house, so they drove to the gate and waited for him there. As he drew near, Lillian saw a troubled look upon his face. She clenched her gloved hands and tried to control herself.

"I do not feel in the humor for sitting in church this morning," said Mr. Hahn, coming close to the carriage and looking steadily at Lillian, "suppose you stay at home with me for company," he said quietly.

The girl, who considered this an excuse that she might be taken to the bedside of her lover, who no doubt was very sick, sprang from the carriage and was seen walking with Mr. Hahn up the path to their home.

"What is it?" she queried hurriedly—"tell me what ails him, father!"

"A strange thing has happened, my child. Mr. Vopel is not at home, nor has he been seen there since eleven o'clock last night," he said gently.

"You say he is not at home, father? Where could he have gone? He may have fallen on his way home last night," she cried hysterically.

"No, Lillian, his housekeeper says that he reached home all right but that he left the house again at eleven o'clock. He was carrying a hand bag, but said nothing to her as he went out.

"A little later, she says, a man called and inquired for him. He seemed very angry when he found that Mr. Vopel had returned home and left it again. He would only give his name as 'Dick' and said that Mr. Vopel would know who he was."

"Oh, father, suppose something has happened to him! We must go and search. Who knows where the poor fellow is now; he may be in great trouble. Let us go, father," she urged wildly.

"That would hardly do, my child. It would not look well for you to go in search of this man. Besides, I am getting too old to be of much use when it comes to climbing the mountains or beating the brush, but I will go over for Sam. He, no doubt, can find out something for us."

"May I go with you, father? I know Sam will search for him if I ask him to."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Hahn, "come along."

To him the disappearance of Vopel was a great relief. "If the fellow has only gone for good," thought he, "a big load will be taken off my mind." They found Sam clearing away his breakfast dishes, for he still maintained his bachelor quarters and did all his own work. It was with no little surprise that he received his morning visitors, and when he heard the object of their visit, he said he supposed that Vopel had indeed been overtaken by some trouble; but as for *sickness*, he could not conceive how the man would have been taken ill so suddenly that he could not find his way home. However, Sam was discreet; he simply signified his willingness to do all in his power to locate Mr. Vopel.

The three walked back together as far as Mr. Hahn's house, where Sam renewed his promise to search the woods and hills diligently and to let them know the first tidings he received of the missing man. Then he proceeded to Mr. Vopel's house, for surely, that was the proper place to start out from, thought he. The housekeeper told him the same story she had told Mr. Hahn. When she mentioned the man "Dick", Sam picked up his ears and questioned her closely as to his appearance.

He then searched the woods around the house, but nothing he could find indicated the direction Mr. Vopel had taken in his flight. True, he had very little faith in the theory that Vopel might be near home, yet he would do his part to hunt for him and do it thoroughly.

The dinner hour arrived, but Sam was not willing to give up his search to satisfy the inner man; he would search on until nightfall, when he would return to the Hahns to make his first report.

From past experience, Sam had acquired much of the cunning of a detective. He knew how to ask questions without giving any information. In this way he inquired from every one he met "if they had seen Mr. Vopel that morning," or else, "could they tell him where Mr. Vopel lived and did they know if he was at home that morning."

But the answer invariably came back, that they knew nothing of Mr. Vopel or else that they had never heard of him; who was he?

Sam considered this a point gained, as it proved that Vopel was not the sociable gentleman he had led him to believe he was. In fact, he had made no friends outside of Mr. Hahn's household. Who then could this "Dick" be? He had left no address and the world was large to be searching for a man whose only known name was "Dick." Thus the day closed with little or no success. This, however, did not discourage Sam. He resolved that on the morrow he would direct all his efforts to the finding of the mysterious "Dick" and see what light he could throw on the subject.

He stopped at Vopel's house on his way back and left word that if "Dick" should call again, to send him over to his house.

Monday was spent much as Sunday, and Tuesday followed with no better results. John Vopel had completely dropped out of existence as far as that neighborhood was concerned. No one had seen him, no one knew anything about him. On Wednesday evening about dark, Sam was accosted near his own home by a large, rough looking man.

- "Say, neighbor," he remarked, "can you tell me where a man lives around here who goes by the name of Sam?"
- "That's not hard," was the reply, "a man ought to know where his own house is."
- "Are you the fellow? Well, I heard that you wanted to see me."
 - "Yes," said Sam. "And who might you be?"
- "My name is Dick, and they told me at Vopel's house that you wanted to see me."
- "Oh, you are Dick, are you? Come over to the house, I want to talk to you."
- "What about?" said Dick, showing no inclination to follow Sam.
- "It is about a mutual friend of ours; so we might as well sit down on the porch while we talk it over." They proceeded to the house, which Sam entered, returning in a moment. He offered Dick a cigar, and seated himself near him in such a way that the light from the house fell full upon Dick's face but left his in the shadow.
- "Now," said Sam, "I happen to know that you and this man Vopel are friends and I also know that he has disappeared and as I have some good news

for him I thought you would be able to locate him for me."

"Wish I could," Dick said, "The truth of the matter is that Jim Lambert, the fellow you know as John Vopel, and I used to pull together. Then you see I got pinched, with two others of the gang. Jim, he missed it. Well, you see, we got sent up and served our time, but he's got that a-hanging over him yet. Then, too, he's been pretty busy since we parted company, judging from the money he's been spending."

"Look here, Dick," said Sam. "You've got a grudge against this fellow or you wouldn't be willing to tell me all this."

"That's what's the matter, pard," replied Dick.
"You see, it's this way. We left a lot of swag up
the Clove there when we had to skip from the dogs
that was set on us. That's the time we were holding that crazy fellow, Ed Hahn, for a ransom."

Sam pricked up his ears. This fellow was more interesting than he had anticipated. "Go on," he said.

"Well, you see," continued Dick, "we all got away; only they wasn't off our track long before we got cornered. Jim, he comes back here and gathers up all the swag and lives like a gentleman, while we're doing time. Then I comes up here, you see, to look things over and finds him. So says I,

Jim, I want my share of the stuff we left up here, and he says he never saw it. Now, pard, he lied to me, for where did he get all this money from?"

"Do you know why he left here?"

"Do I know! Well, I guess I do. You see, I told him it was a case of shell over or get that new suit of his spoiled by some pills I carry here." Dick drew forth a revolver which looked fully capable of spoiling both the front and back of that new suit, without traveling around the occupant.

"Did he tell you what he was doing up here?" asked Sam.

"Yes," said Dick. "He told me that he was going to marry a sister of Ed Hahn. Said she had barrels of money all her own and that he would give me a slice of that. But you see, I might starve to death before he could get that girl to agree to hand her money-bags over to him, so I tells him to come up right away, and he skips."

Sam had been watching Dick closely all the time he had been speaking. That he had seen him before he was positive. He could not place him until Dick spoke of the dogs; then it all came back to him.

"Do you remember that afternoon," said he, "when the dogs were tearing you to pieces and two balls from a rifle saved your life?"

Dick gave a start. "How did you know anything about that?"

- "Simply because I pulled the trigger. Then I started to nurse you when your friend came along and played a trick on me."
- "Well, you see, pard, I hated to throw you down after all you'd done for me, but I reckon you'll admit that was not a very healthy location for us fellows about that time."
- "If you think I did you a good turn then," said Sam, "you can square matters now. I want this John Vopel shown up, as it were, and as for you, I will guarantee that you come to no harm through me."
 - "What do you want me to do?" asked Dick.
- "Go over to Mr. Hahn's house and tell him the same story you have told me."
- "I don't like that job," said Dick. "It looks too much like sticking your head in the lion's mouth to suit me."
- "You need have no fear of that," said Sam, "and perhaps you can see your old captive. He would like to hear the story no doubt."

Dick's hesitation did not last long. He had always felt mean at the way he had treated the fellow who had saved his life. Here was an opportunity, as Sam had said, to square himself.

"Come on," said he. "I'll do it, by God! It will be giving me another crack at him, too!"

It was nearing ten o'clock when Sam and Dick

•

approached Mr. Hahn's house. Sam called to Mr. Hahn and asked if he could speak to him a moment.

"Why, to be sure, Sam," said Mr. Hahn. "Come right up and we will go to the library."

Sam motioned Dick to follow him, and together they entered the house. Scarcely had they been in the house ten minutes when Sam appeared to tell Lillian that Mr. Hahn wanted her. A sense of dizziness came over her as she rose to follow Sam; a foreboding of bad news had taken possession of her, otherwise why was she summoned into the presence of that rough looking man. She paused at the door?

"You wish to speak to me, father?" she asked.

"Yes, my child, come in," said Mr. Hahn. "This man has told me something of the past life of Mr. Vopel, and I wish to have you hear it from his own lips. Draw your chair up by me and be seated."

"Now, sir, if you will commence, I would like you to tell all you know of this man."

Dick moved uneasily in his seat for a moment; then settled down and commenced his story. He recounted his knowledge of Jim Lambert from the day they first met in the saloon until he had disappeared three nights before. Lillian, poor child, sat and watched him as he painted her sweetheart as the central figure of this picture of iniquity. Her first impulse was to leave the room, but she knew

that she must hear the story through. When Dick came to the part of the tale that pertained to her, she realized the man was speaking the truth, for he told many things that had only been known to John Vopel and herself.

The man to whom she had given her love had taken into his confidence this coarse creature, this man who did not blush to acknowledge himself a criminal.

A complete revolution had taken place within her. Hatred reigned supreme in that heart which a short time before had responded to love's call. Tears did not come to her relief; indignation held full sway.

When the story was finished, she made no comment, but bidding them all good-night, left the room. In the hall she paused. Should she go upstairs? No, this was a time for rejoicing and not for solitude; she had been delivered from a terrible fate and she would look upon it as an act of Providence.

Turning to the porch she joined those seated there and entered into the conversation with such vigor that she surprised herself. Shortly afterwards, when Mr. Hahn joined them, Lillian requested that he tell them all what they had heard that night.

"Don't you think that to-morrow would do better, my dear? You have endured enough for one spell." "No, father," replied Lillian. "You were all right and I was wrong, and I want you all to rejoice with me for having escaped a terrible calamity."

The blow she had received was a hard one and though she suffered much she was unwilling that anyone should see it. Patiently she sat through the ordeal and when it was finished Mrs. Hahn was the first to speak.

"My child," she said, "I am very sorry that anyone has dared to play with your affections, but since Mr. Vopel has gone for good, you must not feel lonely or forsaken. You know that you are the same to us as you were before that man came among us."

Ed vouchsafed no remarks, but inwardly rejoiced at his rival's exposure.

On the following day a new difficulty presented itself. Vopel's horse arrived in care of the lad who had taken charge of it. Lillian would have liked very much to retain the animal, yet she knew full well that it was impossible for her to accept anything from John Vopel's hands. What was to be done with it? She appealed to Mr. Hahn, who suggested that the animal be sold and the proceeds given to the poor as a donation from an unknown person.

This indeed seemed the only solution; so the horse

was led to the stable, where the boy inquired for the man who owned him. The coachman told him that he had skipped and that was all he knew about him.

Ed who had been morose and sullen, now appeared as a jovial admirer. Though not so fluent or ready as the more experienced Vopel, he was certainly sincere, and Lillian knew that in accepting his attentions, she was contributing to the happiness of all around her. She was free to receive all the love which came pouring in upon her from every side, and as for Ed, he was by no means the last to pay homage to the girl they all loved so well.

CHAPTER XX.

"ONE OF THE NOBILITY."

THE sun shone bright and strong and after dinner Lillian went out on the lawn to seek the shelter of a friendly chestnut tree. No doubt, it had been her intention to read, for she held a book in her hand; but when Ed approached her half an hour later the book lay unopened in her lap and her eyes seemed fixed on the summit of the Berkshire Hills, far away.

"I will trade my thoughts for yours, Lillian," he said, drawing near.

Lillian gave a start, as though suddenly awakened from a sound sleep; then laughingly said, "I am afraid you would be the loser."

- "Well, if I am," said Ed, "you can make it up in some other way."
- "How do you mean, Ed? In what way could I make it up?"
- "Oh, let me hold your hand for half an hour, or give me one of those old smiles of yours. That would compensate a fellow for the loss of half his life."

- "I am afraid that would have to be a case of pay in advance."
 - "Have I interrupted your reading?"
- "Not at all; you see I have not opened my book, yet."

As she spoke Lillian picked up her book and opened it where a card marked the place of her last reading.

- "Oh, I see, you reserved that until I should come around to bother you."
- "What a foolish fellow you are, Ed," said Lillian as she closed the book again. "Come, now, sit down here beside me and see if we can't spend one afternoon together without quarreling."
- "It's a go," he answered, and sat down as close to Lillian as he could.

Lillian looked up and smiled but said nothing, and indeed it appeared as though their contract was to be carried out by sheer force of silence. After a time, Ed rested his arm on the back of the bench on which they were sitting and as there was no objection raised he gently moved his hand forward and drawing Lillian closer to him, said, "Mind, you do not start any quarreling while you are under a flag of truce."

"You are not playing fair," said Lillian laughing.

"Oh, it is a case of cause and effect. The cause is your adorable self and the effect—"

"Is very pleasing to the cause," interrupted Lillian. Ed's arms tightened around the girl beside him. "Lillian," he said, "I love you. How many times have I told you that I love you?"

"Not once," she said, "that is I do not remember your having done so."

"Well, do you think that your memory is in a sufficiently good state of cultivation to retain the fact that I have just said so?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"I will take means to impress it upon you, then," and taking Lillian's face between his hands he kissed her.

Twice within one week had those lips been kissed by a wooer and, strange as it may seem, in neither case did Lillian offer any resistance. Vopel had gone and Lillian never wished to see him again. The spell was broken and, thrown back into her old life, she soon realized that Ed was more suited to her. The sparks of childish sympathy and love still remained kindled, though the flame had died down and had for a time been obscured by the glare of a false beacon. So under the trees, and almost within the shadow of the neighboring house, Lillian again plighted her troth, but this time the news was received with generous rejoicing. Ed and Lil-

lian were constantly together now, no matter which one was wanted, the question was invariably, "where are they?" for it was well known within that household that where one was found, there the other would be.

A month rolled by in this way, the green leaves were showing the touch of the frosty hand of winter. The nights had become too cool to sit out of doors and the roads were deserted. All the summer visitors had scattered to their homes, and the villagers after a busy season, were glad to snuff their candles early and seek the rest which they so much needed.

At the house on the side of the mountain the lights still burned brightly, as Mr. Hahn and his family loved to linger late in the lovely Catskills. Few were about save them since the house next to theirs was deserted by Mr. Vopel, so that any noise abroad caused instant remark.

"I wonder who that can be?" asked Mr. Hahn, as he listened to footsteps coming up the gravel path.

"Seems we're soon to find out," remarked Ed, as an instant later the ringing of the bell announced a visitor at the door.

All eyes followed the servant as she moved through the hall.

"Why, it's Sam," said Lillian, "whatever has



"Read it," said Sam

** **** ***

brought you out to-night, Sam? I thought you were going to keep early hours."

Sam made no reply, but merely nodded his head. Walking over to where Mr. Hahn sat, he handed him a letter which bore a foreign postmark.

"What is this?" asked Mr. Hahn.

"Read it," said Sam.

Mr. Hahn looked at the address, "Samuel Mac-Dougal. Is that your name, Sam?" he queried, abruptly.

"It always used to be, sir, when I was at home."
Mr. Hahn opened the letter and read aloud:
"Dear Sir:

Sir Regnald MacDougal of ——Shire, Scotland, passed away on the seventh of April last. After careful investigation we find that you are the next of kin, your father being dead over twelve years and he the only brother of Sir Regnald.

We request, sir, that you come to Scotland as soon as possible and take possession of your estates here. We would also inform you that there is a large surplus of ready cash awaiting your judicious investment, as Sir Regnald had attended to no active business for some years prior to his death.

Awaiting your orders, we are,

MAC BURNEY & MAC BURNEY,

163———St., Edinburgh, Scotland."

- "Well, well well!" exclaimed Mr. Hahn. "So you are going to enter the aristocracy, are you, Sam? I suppose the title goes with this?"
- "Wait until I get the money," responded Sam, "and we will see about the rest. I am an American, sir, and we don't grow titles on our soil."
- "No," said Mr. Hahn, "but we might import one."
 - "Not while I've got my gun about me," said Sam.
 - "When are you going, Sam?" asked Mr. Hahn.
- "To-morrow," was the answer, "that is, I'm going as far as New York. Can't say when I start to swim the pond."
 - "Do you know any one over there?"
- "Not a mother's son of them, nor I won't when I get back, either."
 - "How long will you stay?" asked Mr. Hahn.
- "It depends upon how active they are a bidding, sir. I'll stick up a red flag the first day I get there and commence to sell out."
- "I would not appear too eager, Sam. It might look as though you were not grateful to your relative for dying."
- "Well, sir, it's the first thing he ever did for me and it's likely to be the last, so I don't care what they think."
 - "And what will you do with this money?" asked

Mr. Hahn. "I suppose you will sell your little place over the way."

"No, sir, I wouldn't sell that house if I was worth ten times as much as I am likely to be. But I'll tell you, Mr. Hahn, just what I am going to do. I've wanted to do it this many a year but couldn't; but now I am going to see the thing through if it takes the last penny."

"What is that, Sam?" asked Lillian.

"I'll tell you, Miss Lillian; I'm going to take a big slice of these mountains and I'm going to put up a big house here. Then I'm going to make a collection of orphan girls. You see, boys can take care of themselves better than girls can."

Sam said this in a sheepish way, as though he was afraid that they would laugh at him.

"After I get the house full, I'm going to sit right down there and make things pleasant for them, and if you ever see Sam off of his own property again, it will be because Mr. Hahn here or some of you has sent for me. I've seen some good days and pretty bad ones, up here on these hills, and right here is where I'll make my home."

"That's lovely, Sam," smiled Lillian, cordially. "But you see you will have to have some women folks around, so I am going to apply right now for a position as manager."

"Oh, Miss Lillian," said Sam, "that position is

already filled. I'm going to be manager there. Then, too, I don't think you would be suited for that kind of work; you would make a better manager in your own home."

As he spoke Sam looked over at Ed and smiled. "There you got it, Lillian," said Ed. "Sam's proposed for me and as he is going away to-morrow, you had better give us your answer now."

The gathering was such a family one that Lillian did not feel in the least embarrassed. Turning to Ed, she said, saucily:

"You had better not be too sure, sir. Maybe Sam proposed for himself, and as he is going away so soon, I might accept his offer, so I could accompany him."

"If it was anybody else but Ed concerned, Miss Lillian," said Sam, "I would take you at your word and we should go to the parson's to-night and have the knot tied, even if we did have to get him out of bed. But I'm thinking that my orphan home is a better place for me."

"Well," said Lillian, "you can't keep me away from there, and I shall come to see you often and help you entertain the little girls."

On the following morning Sam left for New York. As he went to the number of the street where he had formerly lived he was astonished to find a twenty-story building there."

"By gosh!" he said, "this is the number, but I had forgotten the appearance of the house; it's a fine mansion that I can refer to as my old home."

Sam found that everything had gone on in proportion. His friends had scattered and, look where he would, he could find but one; an old stationer, with whom he had left his address.

The trip to Scotland was an eventful one for him. He had always been accustomed to a sound footing and when tossed about by the rolling billows was almost persuaded to become a Scotchman—almost, but not quite.

"This bonny land beyond the sea is not the place for you and me," said Sam, as he patted his moneybags after he had turned every available thing into cash and once more stood on the pier, waiting his opportunity to board the outgoing steamer.

On arriving home, he started at once on the plans for his orphanage, and no one was more eager in putting the project through, than Lillian, whom he always referred to as "his first orphan."

CHAPTER XXI.

"A GLORIOUS STORM."

"Ship ahoy, there! I've lost my girl. Has anybody seen Lillian?" Ed Hahn was rampaging through the house like a boy. They had all returned to the city and were enjoying life in their new mansion on Central Park West. "I declare, Lillian," he said, "if you don't come from your hiding-place I will go alone and see 'The Belle of Greater New York.'"

A door flew open and Lillian stepped out at once. "You can get two tickets," laughed she, "I want to see that charming new leading man awfully."

"You go along," said Ed. "Do you think that I am going to let you play hide-and-seek with me all day and then take you to the theatre at night?"

"Get the fifth row in the centre aisle," said Lillian, "and if you are a good boy I will let you kiss me when we get home."

"A bird in the hand, you know, Lillian." And Ed sprang forward and taking Lillian in his arms received or rather took his reward in advance. "Now," said he, "I will go for the tickets."

A winter of many social duties lay before them and there were many admirers who would gladly have placed their hearts and fortunes at Lillian's feet, but she was not a flirt. Though fond of admiration she was not a girl of light moods and once her word was given, she lived up to the letter of it.

The usual controversy as to the day of their wedding took place between Lillian and Ed, but Lillian would hear of nothing but a June wedding.

"Look at Will and Nina," she cried. "If the spring will bring us as much happiness as it has them, I am sure we can afford to wait."

"Yes," said Ed, "that would be all right if it were last spring; but to wait all winter! I tell you, Lillian, you are getting too old to waste so much time on dates and seasons: you will soon be an old maid, if we don't hurry the wedding along."

"Not much danger. I will be a married woman longer than I am a maid, anyway. As for getting old, I wish to say, sir, that you are not very complimentary to me."

"Say, Lillian," said Ed. "I tell you what we can do. Suppose we run away and get married and keep the announcement to ourselves until next June."

- "No, sir, when I marry you I want the privilege of talking back without people thinking that I am impudent."
- "See, mother, what a bright picture of wedded life this young lady is unfolding before me!" he cried dramatically.
- "Well," said Lillian, "I want you to know from the start what a bargain you are getting."
- "How kind you are!" said Ed. "When the knot is tied, you and I will be one and we will be of one mind, my dear."
- "Yours or mine?" asked Lillian, as a roguish smile played round her mouth.
- "I suppose it will be yours," said Ed. "If you are like most of the women I hear about."
- "No, Ed dear, it will not be mine; it will be the two merged into one," she said softly.
- "How sweet your sentiments are, Lillian! When I think of how near I came to losing you, my darling, my mind reels and I feel dizzy, as though I had been standing on the brink of a frightful precipice. What would the future have been to me, had you married another man! You were born, my darling, to restore my mind and I have been saved that I might devote my life to you," he said as he kissed her.
- "And so you shall, dear; the future lies before us and will be just as we make it."

The snow was falling in large flakes. Without, the wind was howling, as they stood looking over the Park from the drawing-room window.

"Look, Ed," said she, "isn't this a glorious storm? See how the trees bend. Do you know, I would just love to be out there among those drifts?"

"Get your things on then, girlie," Ed cried, "but bundle up warm, mind you."

A few moments later Mrs. Hahn met them in the hall, muffled and cloaked.

"Where are you going, children?" she asked in surprise.

"Oh, just to take a little stroll through the Park," said Ed, gaily.

"My, my!" exclaimed Mrs. Hahn, "how restless you two are becoming; you will be blown off your feet."

Their only answer was a merry laugh as they plunged through the snowdrifts that were banked high against the house. They fought their way across the avenue and entered the Park, where they found the paths comparatively open, owing to the wind.

"This is fine," said Lillian. "The park is more beautiful to me, covered with this white mantle, than it is under the broiling sun of summer."

"Yes," said Ed, "and it has another advantage, we have it all to ourselves."

"Not quite to ourselves, Ed dear, for here comes a man now."

A fresh gust of wind hurled the snow into their faces and they were compelled to turn their heads aside as the man passed them.

"Lillian," said Ed, "don't you think we had better return now; you must not tire yourself."

As Ed spoke, the man turned and looked back; he had recognized the voice.

"God bless her!" he murmured. "If I had only known!"

He went on his way and was soon lost from view in the storm. Lillian and Ed fought their way to the entrance through which they had entered the Park and were soon throwing off their wraps within the friendly shelter of their home.

"The Storm King is generous to you, my dear," said Ed. "He has called into play the decorating company from within and right royally has it painted your cheeks."

Lillian commenced to laugh. "I guess," said she, "that he had only enough left for your nose. Oh, Ed dear, if you could only see it."

As they were talking, Nina entered the room. "I came over to see if there was anything the matter," she said. "I saw you go out a little while ago and I was afraid something had happened."

Will Harris had built a house next to Mr. Hahn's,

with ample lawn between them. On the other side, a similar lot had been reserved for Ed, and now that it was a settled fact that he and Lillian were to be married, the contracts had been given out for a house in every respect the same as Will's.

Nina's presence was a surprise as she being more cautious than Lillian, no one looked for her on a day like this.

"No," said Ed, "there is nothing the matter; we were only taking a constitutional; the air is so invigorating this morning that we were unwilling to miss it."

"I have always heard," said Nina, "that love is blind, but heretofore I thought that applied to one another's faults; but now it seems it has gone so far as total blindness if you couldn't see that it is unfit for walking to-day."

"There is where you are mistaken, Nina," said Lillian. "We enjoyed the Park immensely—it is simply beautiful over there."

"I am afraid, Lillian," said Nina, "that we will have to employ another governess for you. You do not seem able to take care of yourself as yet."

"All right," said Ed. "I'm open for the position."

"You?" said Nina, laughing. "You are as bad as she is. We'll have to send for Sam for you."

"That's not a bad idea," answered Ed. "Sup-

pose we send for him and show him what New York is like when it puts on its society clothes."

Lillian was greatly in favor of this suggestion, and after consulting Mr. and Mrs. Hahn, the invitation was sent.

The Christmas holidays were now approaching and as usual the days were to be celebrated at Mr. Hahn's house. Shopping and secrets seemed to be the reigning passion with everybody—and each was busily engaged with their own. The greatest pleasure, however, seemed to rest with Will and Nina. They had their children to provide for and, notwithstanding the fact that every one in that household had prepared a pleasant surprise for these same little ones, they were Nina's, and a mother's joy like a mother's love is so pure and unalloyed that none other can compare with it.

On Christmas eve all hands assembled. The little ones were soon tucked in bed and the tree was brought forth. No one seemed to be more painstaking than Lillian. A natural lover of art, she arranged the balls and tinsel, with the other ornaments, so that the color would blend and all things be in harmony.

"See, mother," said Nina, with a bantering smile, "Lillian is studying effects for the benefit of your future namesake."

"With all my heart," said Lillian. Then going

over to Mrs. Hahn she put her arms round her neck and whispered:

"Mother it will be the happiest day of my life when I can present to you a grandchild."

"Come," said Mr. Hahn, "suppose we have a glass of wine and retire early. The children will have us up between times to-morrow morning and we old folks need our rest."

So the wine was brought and the glasses quickly filled.

"Suppose you give us a toast, Ed," said Will with a twinkle in his eye.

Ed rose immediately and holding up the glass said.

"Here's to the fairest woman in all this landmy Lillian."

Lillian refused to drink it.

"I decline to drink to a toast untrue," said she.

"I value Ed's love and love him with all my heart
in return, but to-night I refuse to accept the toast he
offers, giving you instead one which I know your
hearts will ratify." Then turning to Mr. Hahn she
continued, "Here's to the fairest woman in all this
land—your wife, our mother."

And thus was the toast drunk, and the family separated for the night.

Long before dawn of day childish voices rang through the house with the cry, "Mamma, can't we

get up?" and a wild scramble over the stairs followed in the wake of the coveted permission.

Before Lillian had time to join them, Ed placed a beautiful diamond ring upon her finger, and clasped her to his heart.

"This," said he, "is the happiest day of all the year, and to us, dear Lillian, it marks the first visible record of our united existence," and receiving her happy kiss in return together they went downstairs to join in the merriment of the day.

CHAPTER XXII.

DETECTED BUT NOT CAUGHT.

In the fall of that year, a man bought a ticket from Palenville to New York, and when he arrived there, in an absent-minded way he boarded a car and was soon speeding on towards the Bowery. When he realized where he was going he alighted and took another car going in the opposite direction.

At One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street he finally got off and secured a boarding-place for himself in this neighborhood. This accomplished, he went to look for work.

The first place he applied at was a large store, where he was referred to the manager.

The manager looked him over. "How about references?" he queried.

"I have none," replied the man—who was none other than Jim Lambert or Mr. John Vopel. "I have just arrived in the city this morning."

"Well," said the manager, "have you no references from the place you came from?"

"No," was the response, "I have not held any

steady position for some time. I had some money and was taking life easy."

"I am sorry," said the manager, "but I am afraid you won't do."

Crestfallen, yet not entirely discouraged, the man left the store. He now realized for the first time what it was to be a man without a character. References—who could he refer to? The associates of his honest day had no doubt forgotten him, and "Bob" and "Charley" would do him more harm than good, even if he could find them. As for "Dick," he would only be a millstone round his neck.

Where to turn, to whom to apply, he did not know. But he had vowed to be an honest man and would starve before he broke that vow.

For several days he wandered from place to place, receiving first a rebuff, then a curt, "no!" People did not seem to be able to treat a man civilly who wanted work. At last he saw a sign that gave some promise. The sign read "Porter Wanted." He applied and without a request to show references, was hired.

As he pulled on a pair of overalls, he smiled to himself. "What a drop for the gentleman, 'John Vopel.' Nevertheless, this is honest work, and an honest footing once established, I may once more be able to climb the ladder of respectability."

It did not take his employer long to find out that he had employed a man of education as his porter. He watched him closely, wondering why he had fallen to such a low position. After a month's trial, he called Lambert into his office to question him.

- "Why," said he, "did you apply for the position of porter?"
- "Simply because I saw that you wanted a porter, sir, and I wanted work."
- "But why did you not apply for a better position?"
- "Because I did not wish to be refused," said Lambert.
- "Have you ever had any experience as an outside salesman, Lambert?"
- "Yes, sir, some years ago, when I was a younger man."
- "Do you think you could undertake it now? One of our men has just left us and you could take this district, it is from Fifty-ninth Street north. You should make good money, Lambert, if you are active."
- "Thank you, sir. Give me a little time to get acquainted with the trade, and I think I can fill the post," was the answer.

Never had he in his life discarded a garment with as much satisfaction as that pair of overalls. Yet

when they were taken off for the last time he carefully rolled them into a bundle.

"They are my trade mark of honesty," he thought, "and I will keep them as long as I live."

On the following morning, he appeared before his employer dressed as a gentleman.

"Now," he said, "I am ready, sir, to learn the details of my new position."

Storm or sunshine, it made no difference to Jim Lambert, he visited the trade and supplied the wants. It was while on his way to see a customer that he had passed Lillian and Ed that bleak morning in December.

In business his stride was rapid, and ere he had served the firm very long he was requested to carry money to the bank, as he had to pass that institution. Jim Lambert, the notorious thief, had worked his way into the confidence of his employers, but the strangest part of it all was that he had not saved any money. A beggar's hand was never stretched out to him in vain. Many were the days when he would do without his luncheon that he might drop a coin into the palm of some poor soul.

"I have robbed the rich," he would say to himself, "I will now feed the poor!"

At night Lambert would stroll down to Central Park and linger in the vicinity of Mr. Hahn's house, trusting that he might get a glimpse of Lillian as she passed the window. When he was successful in this, he would return to his lodging with a lighter heart and a stronger resolve to lead a pure life. At times, he would be fortunate enough to see her leaving the house, leaning on Ed's arm. Then he would follow her, keeping her in sight, but at such a distance as not to attract attention.

On one occasion he made so bold as to board the same car and follow the two to a theatre at Twenty-fourth Street and Broadway. He was tempted to enter, that he might spend one more evening beneath the same roof where he could sit and look at her, even though he dare not speak to her.

Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew forth the price of admission. Then he paused. "No!" said he. "This belongs to the needy, and I would be taking it from them for self-gratification."

Though in one of the liveliest sections of New York, Jim Lambert saw no one. He moved about fully occupied with his thoughts. He sought the darkest walks of Madison Square, that he might meet no one who would recognize him. This was the first time he had ventured below Fifty-ninth Street since his return to the city, and he knew full well that he had no business in that neighborhood.

When he saw the gay throng leaving the theatre, Jim Lambert moved in closer and soon was rewarded by seeing Lillian's beautiful face as she passed be-

neath the electric lights. He was afraid to return on the same car; he had taken too many chances that night, without tempting fate further. He would take the car ahead, then he would be there to see her enter her home.

Hurrying forward he boarded it, but not without his actions having attracted attention. Arriving in the vicinity of Mr. Hahn's house, Lambert stepped from the car and took his position in the shadow of a large tree.

He did not have long to wait and as the door closed behind Lillian and Ed he started his lonely walk uptown. He had not gone far, when he saw a figure concealed behind a tree as he had been. He walked on, wondering what the man's mission might be. Curiosity, or perhaps instinct, impelled him to look back. As he did so, he gave a start. If his eyes did not deceive him, a man was dodging from tree to tree and coming in his direction.

Lambert walked on, looking back whenever he found himself in a deep shadow. At times, he would see nothing and breathe a sigh of relief, only to be cast down as he looked again. Jim Lambert realized that he was being followed. By whom, or for what purpose, he did not know; but followed he surely was.

At the next entrance to the Park, he turned to the right, doubling his trail and quickening his steps,

and was soon lost from sight among the trees. As for the man, he no longer sought the shelter of the trees but hastening forward, followed Lambert into the Park. Not seeing the man, he walked up to a guard and asked him some questions. That the answer was not satisfactory was evident by the impatient manner of the man as he drew back the lapel of his coat, showing a shield. The man was a detective.

The guard was seen to raise his hand and point to the left, and the man hastened in that direction. Jim Lambert had gone to the right; he was no longer pursued. Crossing through the Park, he took an elevated train and in this way reached his lodgings.

A sense of uneasiness came over him. Was he at last to be compelled to pay the penalty of his many crimes? Was this girl, who had unwittingly been the key-note of his reform, now going to be the means of bringing him to justice?

He slept little that night. At times he would peep through the slats of his shutters to see if the house was being watched. In the morning, he resumed his duties, but he was not the same Jim Lambert as of old, he could not tolerate a sound of falling footsteps behind him and was in constant dread of apprehension. The night walks that had done him so much good had ceased; he imagined he could

see a man behind every tree along Central Park West, awaiting his coming, ready to pounce upon him and hurry him off to a felon's cell.

Day after day, Lambert would make his rounds with ever the sword of Justice hanging over him. His employer noticed that his trusted employee was becoming thinner and more hollow-eyed. He advised him to take a rest, but Lambert sought more work. If he could only keep his mind from the one theme!

The winter dragged along and when spring came, Lambert was a mere shadow of his former self. One morning in the early part of June, he stopped in to see a customer on Fifty-ninth Street. The man was busily engaged in talking to two gentlemen. Lambert took a seat until the man could see him. How long he was there he could not tell, when he was startled by the mention of Ed Hahn's name.

"Yes," said one of the men, "it is the anniversary of Will Harris's wedding, the tenth of June, that is why they picked out that day to be married."

"What's the girl's name?" asked the storekeeper.

"She goes by the name of Lillian Hahn, though I believe her right name is Turner."

Jim Lambert waited to hear no more. "I'll call again," said he, as he left the store.

"That fellow is dying fast," commented the storekeeper, as he closed the door behind him.

Out on the street, Lambert kept repeating to himself, "The tenth of June—they will be married on the tenth of June! This is the eighth," he mused. "It is the day after to-morrow." On he walked, caring nothing as to his direction. What mattered it to him! She was to be married on the tenth of June!

He was evidently revolving some plan of action in his mind, for suddenly he struck his clenched fist in the palm of his hand.

"I'll do it," he cried, "no matter what the cost, I'll do it!"

Increasing his pace, he made his way to the elevated station and took a train going downtown; his objective point, Wall Street. When he reached the office of Finn, Quay & Company, he never hesitated, but walked right in, handed his card to the office boy and told him to take it to Mr. Hahn and to tell him that the gentleman wanted to see him on very important business.

Mr. Hahn was a very busy man. He was shaping matters so that he could remain in the mountains all summer and to ordinary callers would have sent word that he could not be seen; but the audacity of this man's presence made him curious.

Lambert entered the room in very humble manner.

- "What is it you want with me?" asked Mr. Hahn sternly.
- "I have come, sir," said Lambert, "to ask a favor of you, which I hope you will grant, when you have heard my story."
- "You are hardly the man I would expect around here, asking favors of me."
- "I know what you refer to," was the reply, "but you do not know the cause."
- "There you are wrong, Lambert. You see, I knew your name before your card was presented."
- "Be kind enough to hear me, sir. I see there is much that you know, and can guess that your informant was Dick; but there is still a good deal that neither you nor he have ever heard."
- "I don't think that any more intimate knowledge of your affairs would be of interest to me, and as I am very busy——"

Lambert raised his hand to detain Mr. Hahn.

- "Do not drive me from you, sir," he begged.

 "This is the last opportunity you will ever have of finding the father of your adopted child."
 - "What do you mean?"
- "Let me tell you my story from the beginning; it will not take long."
 - 'Go on," said Mr. Hahn, "but first be seated."

Lambert dropped into a chair and for a moment remained silent, his head hanging forward on his chest. Finally he raised his eyes and began:

"Twenty-four years ago," he said, "my chum and I spent our vacation where you have since built your summer home. We went there for a month's rest and recreation. In that month I won the love and confidence of the only daughter of one Hiram Turner—"

Mr. Hahn sprang to his feet. "You!" he exclaimed. "You."

"Be seated, Mr. Hahn, there is more to tell," said Lambert. "Yes, Lillian, your adopted daughter is the child of James Lambert.

"My chum was a young clergyman, an honorable man. He was called away after spending three weeks with me, but before he left, he really married me to Katie Turner, Lillian's mother. That last week was one of happiness; but when it came to bringing my bride to the city, I compared her with the girls I knew. She was a good girl, sir, and very pretty, but her country ways made me ashamed of her. Then it was that I told her that we were not married, that my chum was not a minister but merely a salesman like myself.

"There was a scene that I was very glad to get away from. Knowing nothing of her condition, I returned to New York and never saw her again,

nor did I return to that neighborhood for nine years, when I heard that she was dead and also that there was a child. I admit, sir, that I never made any effort to find this child, as I did not wish to be bothered with it.

"The rest of my life you probably know: how I plotted against you and yours. You see, sir, I wish to hide nothing. On the night that I last left Palenville, I was brought face to face with the knowledge that I was making love to my own daughter. I could not tell her that I was her father, so I did the only thing left to do; I fled from the neighborhood. Since that time, I have often seen her, but never where she could see me. I would watch for her at night and feast my eyes upon her. To me, sir, she has been an angel. To her influence is due the reclaiming of a wasted life. Since that night I found she was my child I have been an honest man. I have worked steadily and have done all I could to retrieve the past.

"Now you know all, sir, but the reason that has brought me here."

"Well," said Mr. Hahn, "tell me what it is?"

"By pure accident, sir, I heard that my child was to be married the day after to-morrow and I have come to you, sir, to ask your permission to be there. I would not intrude without it."

"If you are sincere in your resolve, Lambert,

to lead an honest life, I can see no reason for refusing your request. It will recall to you all of the past, as Lillian is to be married in the little stone church in Palenville, the scene of your first transgressions and the scene of your repentance. The ceremony will take place at five o'clock. I will look for you there, but, if possible, do not let her see you; it might shock her."

"I shall enter the church after her, sir, and do nothing to attract her attention. To you, sir, I am very much obliged, and I will assure you that this is the last time I shall ever seek to enter your life."

Jim Lambert returned to his place of business to apply for a two days' leave of absence, which was freely granted him.

The next day was spent in brushing and cleaning his clothes; for he had not sufficient money to purchase a new suit. That night he took a boat for Catskill and on the morning of the tenth of June, went on to Palenville.

Little did he know that his every move was being watched, as he followed the bridal party within those sacred walls.

While the services were being conducted that were to unite Lillian and Ed for life, two men waited without.

"Are you sure that it was he?" asked one.

"Positive," said the other, "wait until he comes out."

It was not long before Lillian appeared radiant and happy leaning on Ed's arm. They were now man and wife. The gathering flocked out from the church to see them off, but Jim Lambert did not appear at the doors.

"Have you seen him?" questioned one of the men.

"No," replied the other. "He has not come out yet." And as he spoke he stepped over to the door and looked in. There sat their man, not ten feet away.

The man at the door beckoned to his comrade to come closer. Together they entered the church and laying a hand on Lambert's shoulder, said,

"You are under arrest Lambert."

He made no reply; offered no protest to the stern arm of the law.

The officer stooped over him and shook him roughly; then glanced up at his companion. "He is dead," he whispered—and it was true.

Jim Lambert had passed beyond the dark river he had escaped the sentence of a worldly law to face the sentence of the Divine law-giver.





The GARDEN SERIES

By Carro Frances Warren

WHEN completed will comprise SIX of the most fascinating, and at the same time uplifting and instructive stories for children ever written.

The titles are:

- (1) Little Betty Marigold and Her Friends.
- (2) Little Polly Primrose and Her Friends.
- (3) Little Goldie Goldenrod and Her Friends.
- (4) Little Topsy Thistle and Her Friends.
- (5) Little Peter Pansy.
- (6) Little Danny Dandelion.



Of these the first two have already been issued, and numbers 3 and 4 will be published in 1909.

Each volume will contain a page showing all the flowers mentioned in the story, in all the beauty of their natural colors. These Nature studies will be of great interest and value to every child reader.

The many colored illustrations and handsome bindings will make any or all of these volumes most attractive gift books for children. They will be sold at a uniform price of 75 cents each.

Polly, Benny and Billy

At all Booksellers, or sent postpaid by

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO. 211 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts

ቖ፞፞ፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙ

PATHS CROSSING

A ROMANCE OF THE PLAINS

By MAUDE CLARK GAY
Author of "The Knitting of the Souls"

There is in this story such a thread of beauty and power, the magic of its style is so rare, so sweet, that its laurels must grow brighter with the passing of time.

WO Eastern girls,—orphans and sisters,—go to Oklahoma to teach in the Indian schools. The romance of their beauty, the tragedy of their love for the same man, the serpent trail of his past, heroic sacrifice, revenge, despair, triumph,—all these strands are woven with the sure touch of the master hand into a tale of intense dramatic fire and pathos and beauty.

᠈ᡢᠩᢆᡢᠹᠩᠩᠹᠩᠹᡊᠹᡊᡢ᠙ᡊᡢᠹᡊᡢᠹᡊᡢᠹᡊᡢᠹᡊᡢ᠙ᡎ

THE GOLDEN WEST

The author has lived her Golden West,—the glory, the color, the freedom of this land of enchantment are painted as she has seen it. Her hero, heroine, desperadoes, scenes, plot,—all are drawn with the broad and breezy strength that the boundless sweep of the plains inspires, and the leaven of love works in its own mysterious way, always new and enchanting.

Handsomely Bound. Striking Illustrations
Price \$1.50

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO.
Boston, Massachusetts

፠ፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙ

Climbing Up to Nature

::: By FLORENCE J. LEWIS::

READ ABOUT

Mrs. Jawkins' tea party—
The grocery man's free outing to his "paid-ups"—
The Christmas supper at the church—
The droll characterization of Miss Beals, Miss Pip,

The droll characterization of Miss Beals, Miss Pip, the Widow Smith, and other dwellers in McCormack's Circle, and you will laugh as you have not laughed over any book in many a long day.

Scintillating with delicious humor, full of just the kind of natural fun we have all hugely enjoyed at times, but have never had the wit to put into words, its drollery flashes back at us in every chapter like the ripples of a sunny brook.

One chapter of such a story is worth a cartload of "problem" novels.

But with all its fun, there is an underlying sympathy for the homely characters so faithfully and good-humoredly protrayed. The efforts of the gifted and lovable heroine to lift them out of their narrow interests, and her own charming romance, lend beauty and harmony of purpose to this brilliant story.

Through the whole book runs a delightful acquaintance with Nature, that softens and sweetens its exuberant fun.

Fully illustrated, handsomely bound Price, \$1.50

THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO.
Boston, Massachusetts

to the standards at the test of the test of the

ᢃᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᠩᢊ

ቖፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙፙ

WOODHULL

By PLINY BERTHIER SEYMOUR

THERE can be no more fascinating background for a story than that romantic age of pioneer days in the Sunny South. In "Woodhull" Mr. Seymour's pen has caught the witchery of the period, and his readers must perforce yield to the spell the tale casts about them.

The son of an English gentleman living in North Carolina is captured by the Indians when a mere child, and in the dawn of manhood finds his kindred again.

The young man is sent to college at Oxford, in England. Then come the stirring days of the Revolution, when his country has need of every son, and he returns to cast in his lot with the struggling patriots.

There are plots and counterplots, exciting episodes and hair-breadth escapes. But love and loyalty and the heart of youth triumph, and happiness comes at last.

Ten Full Page Illustrations
Bound in Art Crash
Price, \$1.50

AT ALL BOOKSELLERS, OR SENT PREPAID BY 長THE C. M. CLARK PUBLISHING CO. 長211 Tremont Street, Boston, Massachusetts 長幼時時間

•



•

.

.

•

· ·

•

•



